British Columbia
Vital Statistics Agency

Annual Financial and Performance Report For 2003/2004

Ministry of Health Services

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1. MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

I respectfully submit the eighth annual report on the operations of the British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency, established April 1, 1996.

This document reports on the Agency's performance and activities in its eighth year of operation, as a Special Operating Agency (SOA).

The Agency's primary objectives are to meet its financial and measurable performance targets. I am pleased to announce the Agency's net operating expenditures were $396,864 under budget and, overall, the Agency produced a net surplus of revenue over expenditure of $3,140,625.

From an organizational perspective the eighth year of operation has been a year of substantial change. During the past year the Agency moved from the Population Health and Wellness Division in the Ministry of Health Planning to the newly formed Knowledge Management and Technology in Ministry of Health Services. This change, combined with retirements, voluntary departures and completion of the workforce adjustment program, resulted in changes affecting almost 20% of Agency staffing positions.

The end of fiscal 2003/04 also saw the completion of the five year Strategic Business Plan for 1999 through 2004. This plan will be replaced with the new Financial and Operational Plan for 2004/05 to 2006/07. The new plan represents a major structural change to the Agency planning process in that it more directly links Agency activities and performance measures to Agency strategies, objectives and goals. In addition the new plan establishes linkages that reflect the closer working relationship between the Agency and the Ministry. The new plan will also be a living document updated annually providing forecasted financial and performance data and describing actions and activities planned for the following three fiscal years.

Fiscal 2003/04 brought the Agency a number of new challenges as well as the opportunity for significant achievements. Some of these are:

- A decision of the Supreme Court of Canada declared unconstitutional two sections of the *Vital Statistics Act* involving paternity and the naming of children. This decision resulted in considerable effort drafting proposed legislative changes to address the issues of concern to the court. At the same time the Agency took the opportunity to introduce legislative changes which enhance security relating to the registration and certification process.

- The British Colombia Court of Appeal decision removing the prohibition against same-sex marriage resulted in much effort during a very short time frame as the Agency implemented the decision of the court and adapted the marriage program accordingly.

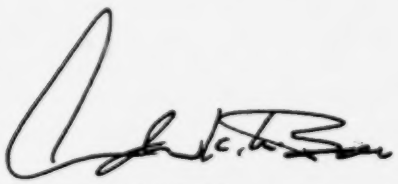
I would like to highlight some of the accomplishments reported in the document:

- In one of its many activities related to increasing security related to personal identification, the Agency, in partnership with Passport Canada, successfully conducted a pilot project for the electronic verification of birth certificate information for persons born in British Columbia making passport applications through the Victoria Passport Office. This pilot confirmed the feasibility of electronic identity verification and identified data and systems improvements required prior to implementation of a full production system, while protecting individual data confidentiality requirements.

- Following a successful pilot enabling external access to the Vital Statistics Data Warehouse (VISTA) in 2002/03 external access to the production environment was expanded to over 50 users in 2003/04. This enabled all health regions in the province to access vital event data and information on VISTA directly through their medical health officers or delegates. In addition access has been provided to select staff at the Ministry Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Office of the Chief Coroner and the School of Health Research at Simon Fraser University. The access provided enables detailed investigation and analysis of mortality and natality issues through the use of robust and consistent statistical measures.

- In advancing the development of electronic collaboration between the Agency and its business partners a web interface was developed to enable social workers in the Ministry of Children and Families to prepare and submit applications for vital event certificates directly to the vital statistics database electronically. This enables our business partners to obtain the documents they require without additional human intervention in most cases. This will be expanded to other eligible users in future years.

In summary, I would like to acknowledge that the success of the Agency is a direct result of the people who work within, and in support of the organization. The employees of the Vital Statistics Agency and its service providers continue to meet the challenge of making this organization a success as a Special Operating Agency.



Andrew K. McBride
Chief Executive Officer
British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency

2. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS UPDATED

The Statements of Revenue and Summary of Expenditures on the following pages represent the financial results of the Agency for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2004. These statements are not audited. Balances presented have been reconciled with balances presented in the draft Public Accounts for the fiscal year 2003/2004 as certified by the Agency. Detailed expenditure information for fiscal 2003/2004 consistent with details provided in previous reports is located in Appendix A of this Report.

Jack Shewchuk
Deputy CEO, Senior Financial Officer
British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency

2.1. EXPENDITURE SUMMARY 2003/04

Actual net operating expenditures for the fiscal year 2003/2004 were $396,864 under budget. This combined with revenues for the year being over budget by $768,762 results in a net surplus of revenues over expenditures of $3,140,625.

The majority of the expenditure budget surplus is the result of unspent recoveries is excess of target. Under expenditures in Salaries and Benefits is attributed to hiring lags that have occurred in some areas of the Agency. Operating expenses are reported as being under expended by $67,380. However, it should be noted that charges for systems expenditures from Ministry of Health were reduced this year by approximately $110,000; this reduction is not expected to be a recurring item. An over expenditure in Grants and Contributions is related to research projects which were funded by the Ministry of Children's and Families (MCFD); for all expenditures relating to these projects, there is an offsetting recovery. These recoveries are part of the positive variance reported in the internal recoveries category.

The capital allocation for fiscal 2003/2004 was under spent by $157,756 due to careful analysis of ongoing requirements in the systems area.

EXPENDITURE SUMMARY 2003/2004

STOB		TARGET 2003/04	ACTUAL 2003/04	VARIANCE 2003/04
50	Salaries	3,930,000	3,901,621	28,379
51	Supplementary Salaries	38,000	24,562	13,438
52	Benefits	922,000	882,233	39,767
	Total Salaries and Benefits	**4,890,000**	**4,808,416**	**81,584**
57	Travel	65,000	55,964	9,036
59	Common Shared Services	213,500	330,256	(116,756)
60	Professional Services	26,000	9,180	16,820
63	Information Systems	743,500	635,000	108,500
65	Office & Business Expense	527,000	504,224	22,776
68	Statutory Notices	18,000	8,847	9,153
69	Utilities	28,000	32,998	(4,998)
73	Amortization	642,000	599,565	42,435
75	Building Occupancy	569,000	588,586	(19,586)
	Total Operating Expenses	**2,832,000**	**2,764,620**	**67,380**
77	Grants	18,000	115,000	(97,000)
80	Contributions	30,000	22,414	7,586
	Total Grants & Contributions	**48,000**	**137,414**	**(89,414)**
85	**Financing Charges**	0	22,166	(22,166)
	Gross Operating Expenditures	**7,770,000**	**7,732,616**	**37,384**
88	Internal Recoveries	(278,000)	(543,387)	265,387
89	External Recoveries	(407,000)	(501,093)	94,093
	Total Recoveries	**(685,000)**	**(1,044,480)**	**359,480**
	Total Net Appropriated Expenditures	**7,085,000**	**6,688,136**	**396,864**
	Net Income Targets			
	Net Revenue	9,060,000	9,828,762	768,762
	Net Appropriated Expenditures	7,085,000	6,688,136	396,864
	Revenue Over Expenditure	**1,975,000**	**3,140,626**	**1,165,626**
Capital Asset Acquisitions				
	Operating Equipment	5,000	0	5,000
	Office Furniture and Equipment	20,000	26,814	(6,814)
	Information Systems	575,000	415,430	159,570
	Total Capital Acquisitions	**600,000**	**442,244**	**157,756**
	Full Time Equivalent Employees	90.00	82.26	7.74

2.2. REVENUE 2003/04

Revenues for the Agency in fiscal 2003/2004 were $768,762 above target. Areas where actual revenues were significantly above targets include death certificates, marriage licences, and the sale of regular order birth certificates to the general public. Death certificate sales have grown steadily year over year and likely reflect an ageing population. Marriage licence sales appear to be establishing a consistent trend of nominal growth; this is counter to recent national trends that indicated a decreasing marriage rate and likely reflects the change in laws relating to same-sex marriages. In keeping with the trend of marriage licence sales, marriage certificate sales and civil marriage ceremonies have accordingly experienced moderate growth. Birth certificate sales to the general public have increased due to recent national security issues and the increased demands on the part of producers of second level identification (passports and drivers licences) for foundation identification documents such as birth certificates.

Last fiscal year Legal Change of Name revenue was lower than target due to legislative changes requiring adult applicants for changes of name to be fingerprinted. This impact appears to have stabilized this year as revenues for this category have increased slightly over last year, however, they did not meet the target expectations by $71,783 this fiscal year.

	Target 2003/04	Actual 2003/04	Variance 2003/04
Birth Certification	3,260,000	3,635,511	375,511
Death Certification	1,462,000	1,547,417	85,417
Marriage Certification	509,000	556,880	47,880
Change of Name	602,000	530,217	(71,783)
Wills Services	960,000	1,020,409	60,409
Marriage Licences	2,050,000	2,288,873	238,873
Civil Marriage Ceremonies	930,000	989,450	59,450
Registration Amendments	54,000	53,838	(162)
Miscellaneous Services	1,000	31,277	30,277
Dishonoured Cheques	14,000	12,920	(1,080)
Total Gross Revenues	9,842,000	10,666,792	824,792
Commissions Deducted	(757,000)	(826,682)	(69,682)
Doubtful Accounts	(25,000)	(11,348)	13,652
Net Revenues	9,060,000	9,828,762	768,762

3. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The Agency continues to be committed to containing costs while at the same time providing increased service volumes, improved efficiency, and a high level of customer satisfaction. The performance measures detailed on the following pages are used to determine the extent to which the Agency is meeting its strategic goals; specifically goals 1 and 5 as defined in the Framework Agreement and Business Plan. The measures in the tables on the following pages are designed, through comparison of target to actual results, to report on the Agency's ability to meet targets established in the Business Plan. Management also uses these measures for service evaluation and planning.

Service volume measures are used to confirm whether or not the number of services being provided meet expectations. Management also uses this information to track trends for planning new programs and determining resource allocations.

Unit Costs represent a merger of expenditure and service volume information and are used to determine if the Agency is obtaining economic efficiency as a result of its efforts to streamline processing operations and provide more services at less cost. This measure also enables the Agency to gauge its economic efficiency during periods of decreasing service demand.

Service Standards - Days to Complete Service is a measure to determine if the Agency is meeting objectives of reducing turnaround time; this measure is important, because Agency clients increasingly demand faster turnaround on documents and services. This measure is also used to monitor the effect of processing changes designed to reduce turnaround times.

Customer Satisfaction measures based on customer feedback determine if service delivery, staff training and quality service initiatives are effective.

In general the following tables indicate that volumes met target expectations. Unit costs were reduced below target levels (aided by increased volumes and controlling input costs). Service turnaround times were reduced significantly more than originally targeted and customer satisfaction levels met or exceeded projected levels.

3.1. VOLUMES

		Target 2003/04	Actual 2003/04	Variance 2003/04
Legal Certificates				
	Birth Certificates	136,112	133,883	(2,229)
	Marriage Certificates	35,760	39,110	3,350
	Death Certificates	53,320	56,379	3,059
	Change of Name Certificates	4,051	4,724	673
	Total Certificates	**229,243**	**234,096**	**4,853**
Registrations				
	Birth Registrations	39,500	40,544	1,044
	Notice of Birth	39,500	40,544	1,044
	Marriage Registrations	20,500	22,518	2,018
	Death Registrations	27,400	29,720	2,320
	Total Registrations	**126,900**	**133,326**	**6,426**
Wills Services				
	Wills Notices	47,600	41,575	(6,025)
	Wills Searches	12,700	13,053	353
	Total Wills Services	**60,300**	**54,628**	**(5,672)**
Marriage Licence Applications		**25,500**	**22,888**	**2,612**
Legal Changes of Name		**5,050**	**4,659**	**(391)**
Other Services				
	Commemorative Certificates	2,598	3,126	528
	Registration Amendments	2,003	1,993	(10)
	Genealogy Requests	1,732	2,176	444
	Adoption Record Releases	800	637	(163)
	Certified Registration Copies	2,300	3,311	1,011
	Total Other	**9,433**	**11,243**	**1,810**

Falling provincial birth rates have again caused the estimate of the volume for birth certificate sales to be an overly optimistic target. While there were 2,873 more birth certificates issued than in fiscal 2002/03, sales were less than target by 2,229. The corresponding revenue increase indicates that a greater portion of sales is being made to the general public as opposed to other government agencies. Birth registration volumes were slightly better than targets, but actually reflect a slight decrease over the prior years activity.

Increased numbers of marriage registrations may indicate a change in the trend of fewer marriages. Actual volumes for both marriage certificates and registrations have increased between 5 and 6 percent over the previous year and exceeded targets.

The number of deaths is up, but not outside the range of normal fluctuation. Death registrations grew by 2.1 percent over the prior year; the comparable figure for last year was an increase of 1.9 percent. This rate of activity did exceed targets. Death certificates that are required for various reporting purposes usually have volumes that are 80 to 90 percent greater than the number of deaths; this relationship continues to exist this year.

Implementation of legislation requiring the fingerprinting of all adults applying for a change of name was introduced in fiscal 2001/02. Since that time, the number of Legal Changes of Name has been impacted. While the impact of the requirement was within the range originally forecast, target volumes for this service have not been met. However, this year the number of Legal Changes of Name has increased by 7 percent over the previous year, as opposed to an increase of less than one percent in the prior year.

Volumes of all other activities are up slightly from fiscal 2002/03 though in some cases such as Wills Notices remaining below targets.

3.2. UNIT COSTS

	Target	Actual	Variance
Regular Certificates	$14.71	$13.56	$1.15
Rush Certificates	$32.77	$30.23	$2.54
Registrations	$14.25	$13.14	$1.11
Wills Notices	$6.59	$6.08	$0.51
Wills Notice Searches	$16.65	$15.36	$1.29
Marriage Licences	$12.04	$11.10	$0.94
CN Regular	$116.33	$107.30	$9.03
CN Additional	$14.71	$13.56	$1.15
Other Services	$32.98	$30.42	$2.56

In fiscal 2003/2004 the Agency achieved its unit cost targets in all areas of activity. This was primarily due to a combination of cost reduction efforts, increased recoveries, and stable volumes associated with most activities.

Details on the calculation of unit costs are published in section 2.5.1 of the 1999 - 2004 Agency Business Plan.

3.3. SERVICE STANDARDS - DAYS TO COMPLETE

	Target	Actual	Variance
Certificates	5	3	2
Registrations	40	36	4
Wills Notices	3	2	1
Wills Searches	5	4	1
Marriage Licences	1	1	0
Change of Name	10	8	2
Other	10	9	1
Percentage of Units Completed	0.9	0.9	

The Agency met or performed better than all of its service standard targets in fiscal 2003/2004. Of note are the reductions in turnaround time on the event registration process and the certificate production process. These results are due primarily to the facsimile transmission of Notices of Birth and registrations of death from hospitals and funeral homes, and, processing efficiencies of the VISION system.

3.4. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

		Target	Actual	Variance
Courtesy	Excellent	60%	64%	4%
	Good	32%	28%	-4%
	Acceptable	6%	6%	0%
	Below Standard	1%	1%	0%
	Poor	1%	1%	0%
Helpfulness	Excellent	58%	62%	4%
	Good	30%	29%	-1%
	Acceptable	8%	6%	-2%
	Below Standard	2%	1%	-1%
	Poor	2%	2%	0%
Promptness	Excellent	58%	69%	11%
	Good	26%	22%	-4%
	Acceptable	10%	5%	-5%
	Below Standard	4%	2%	-2%
	Poor	2%	2%	0%

Survey returns indicated a better than targeted response on customer satisfaction surveys in all areas.

Responses indicating satisfaction (acceptable to excellent) met or exceeded targets while dissatisfaction responses (below standard or poor) varied positively from target by a net of one percent. Overall there was a continued movement from acceptable and good responses to excellent in all categories.

A regional manager follows up all negative responses, and survey results are reviewed at quarterly management meetings. Actions taken as a result of survey data include workflow reviews to identify and correct processing problems, and staff training initiatives to improve courtesy and helpfulness.

4. REGISTRY OPERATIONS

4.1. BIRTH REGISTRY

4.1.1. Streamline the Receipt of Birth Notices from Hospitals, Physicians and Midwives

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency plans to move forward with the detailed design of the interface necessary to allow for the electronic submission of Notice of Birth (NOB). It is anticipated that a pilot could be implemented as soon as details and interface requirements have been completed.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency continued discussion with the British Columbia Children's Hospital, British Columbia Women's Hospital and the Vancouver Island Health Authority. Overall support was not obtained from the hospitals and regional districts to continue with the electronic transmission of Notice of Birth Information Project as resources for these groups have been directed towards improving patient care as apposed to streamlining administrative functions.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Although it was recognized the need for the initiative, the project could not proceed without the required support. The Agency will continue to receive the Notice of Birth by facsimile 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from hospitals throughout the province. Information received via facsimile is sent to offsite for data entry. The implementation of the electronic submission of Notice of Birth project would enable electronic transmission of information directly to VISION, thereby bypassing the need for manual data entry activities.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to maintain open discussions with hospitals and the health authorities to undertake the electronic submission of Notice of Birth information.

4.1.2. Obtaining Registrations of Births from Birth Parents Electronically

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency would continue to monitor legal issues relating to the registration of live births within the province, and implement technologies for recognition of electronic signatures once their validity was proven.
FUTURE PLANS	Acceptance of birth registrations electronically will not be investigated further until the government authentication

project for acceptance of electronic signatures from the broader public spectrum has been completed.

4.1.3. Physician/Coroner and Funeral Home - Stillbirth Registrations

WHAT WE PLANNED	Proposed legislative changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* to simplify the stillbirth registration process will be submitted for consideration in the 2004 legislative sitting.
WHAT WE DID	The Vital Statistics legislative proposals for the 2004 sitting included the proposed stillbirth amendments, which were accepted and approved. These changes have now been enacted into the *Vital Statistics Act*.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The proposed changes will result in simplification of the stillbirth registration process. By creating a more flexible reporting protocol, it will no longer be necessary for both parents to report or sign the registration document. The changes will ease the emotional hardship on bereaved parents and create consistency in the reporting of deaths.
FUTURE PLANS	Once the legislative changes have been passed, the Agency will proceed with updating its stillbirth registration protocols and forms to accommodate the new provisions. The completion of this plan item will contribute to meeting the Agency's 1.1.1.2 Performance Target for 2004/05.

4.1.4. Birth Registration Handling in Vital Statistics Offices

4.1.4.a. Use of Digital Images

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency will explore alternative capture and storage media for its paper birth registration documents, which are currently being accessed from microfilm records. One method being considered is to digital image records.
WHAT WE DID	The digital imaging of birth registrations on-site or at the time of data entry offsite was investigated and proved to be an expense the Agency could not undertake given budget restraints.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Birth registrations will be continued to be data entered by offsite then microfilmed for permanent storage.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will consider digital imaging of birth registrations if funding becomes available.

4.1.4.b Updating Electronic Birth Information to Certificate Status

WHAT WE PLANNED	There were approximately 90,000 birth records that were identified as being on our computer system in an index format only; microfilm copies of the associated event would have to be accessed if a certificate was requested. The Agency plans to update birth records from 1976 through 1998 where the event is not in certificate-ready status.
WHAT WE DID	Resources were allocated during the year to verifying those birth records that were not in a certificate-ready status. Approximately 16,000 birth registrations were updated to certificate quality.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The updating of these records will allow for automatic verification and production of the birth certificates if the information provided by the client matches the details provided on the original birth registration.
FUTURE PLANS	The remaining birth records requiring entry into the computer system will be captured as funding and resources become available.

4.1.4.c. Capture of E-mail Contact Information

WHAT WE PLANNED	Birth Registrations for newborns will be modified to collect the mother's e-mail address, as another communication alternative for clarifying or obtaining missing details.
WHAT WE DID	A business review of workflow processes was undertaken and it was found to be more effective to modify the birth certificate application form to collect an email address rather than the birth registration form.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The use of e-mail provides a less costly and quicker means of communication to clients for clarifying or providing missing details from the application for service form.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will make necessary changes to VISION to accommodate e-mail communication with clients.

4.2. DEATH REGISTRY

4.2.1. Funeral Homes

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to have a secure web-interface program developed to a stage where a presentation could be made to the Funeral Services Association. The plan had anticipated providing dedicated resources to develop what was envisioned as a real-time entry and registration of death events using this secure interface.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency canvassed Funeral Service Providers through the Funeral Services Association to first determine if the service providers had the equipment that would be necessary to move into a web-based environment and secondly, if there was interest in moving to a secure interface program that would allow for immediate registration of death events. Response to the canvas was minimal but positive. System resources continue to focus on data security overall. The complexities of third party access for submission of information direct to our registry program have proven to be substantial.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Resources will continue to be focused on the security issues associated with web-based registration programs. Although the response to our canvas of Funeral Homes was limited, we were able to begin collection of e-mail addresses for this group of services providers. This will prove to be of assistance to the Agency in providing a quicker method for dissemination of information.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to pursue an on-line registry program. It is recognized that once the security issues can be addressed, an on-line registry development should be straightforward. The development of an on-line death registration program could in turn lead to an on-line marriage registration program. The Agency will seek interest from at least one Funeral Home to pilot a secure web interface program for death registration once the secure web infrastructure has been implemented. The assistance of an end user in the field is instrumental in providing feed back to the Agency for the development and subsequent rollout to other service providers.

4.2.2. Coroner

WHAT WE PLANNED	Once the Coroner's Office has upgraded and completed testing of its new system, the Agency will initiate discussions on the business requirements for the development and implementation of a web-based exchange of data.
WHAT WE DID	The Coroner's Office has not yet completed development of its new computer system. The Agency is now positioned to obtain data electronically from external public sector sources. The Agency now has the infrastructure required to share records electronically with external organizations because of work done with Passports and Human Resources Development Canada.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Once the Coroner's office has completed the upgrade of its computer system; it will be in a position to further explore the possibility of electronic data exchange. By speeding up the receipt of finalized report on cause of death and by making the process easier for coroners and their staff to submit this information, medical data will be collected in a more timely manner. This will also enable the two organizations to maintain consistent data for causes of death as determined by Coroners.
FUTURE PLANS	Once the Coroner's Office has upgraded and completed testing of its new system, the Agency will initiate discussions on the business requirements for the development and implementation of the electronic exchange of data.

4.2.3. Physician

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to explore the viability of electronic submission and capture of data direct from physicians to the VISION computer system.
WHAT WE DID	Preliminary discussions into standard operating practices of the physicians and coroners was undertaken. It was determined that current operating practices and web-based security does not support a true electronic submission of records at this time.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The Agency will continue to seek alternate procedures for the timely capture of medical certification of both birth and death events. Physicians, coroners and funeral homes

	remain positive about the viability of electronic information submission methods and discussions are ongoing.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to seek methods of electronic submission and investigate the implications of acceptance of electronic signatures.

4.2.4. Vital Statistics Offices

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency plans to continue microfilming Death Registration forms and Medical Certificates of Death but will investigate the possibility of electronic storage through digital imaging. During the next fiscal year, a pilot project will be undertaken to examine "in-house" digital imaging and to determine its feasibility. Based on the outcome of the pilot project, the ability to expand this activity will be assessed.
WHAT WE DID	An assessment of business processes was undertaken to determine the feasibility of onsite scanning and indexing of Death Registrations and Medical Certificated of Deaths. Although feasible, staffing levels did not permit the Agency to undertake the pilot project.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Although on-site digital imaging is feasible, concerns remain as to the overall impact of this ongoing activity would have on the specific work units. The project remains on hold pending further analysis and pilot testing.
FUTURE PLANS	Digital image technology development will be utilized where feasible and appropriate to streamline workflow within the Agency.

4.3. MARRIAGE REGISTRY

4.3.1. Religious Representatives

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency will promote alternative methods of transmitting notices of changes and cancellations by religious bodies including facsimile transmission and e-mail attachments.
WHAT WE DID	Where a religious body possessed the technology and capability, the use of facsimile and e-mail communication was encouraged and utilized. The specific implementation of electronic transmission of PDF files for registration purposes was not pursued, as it does not provide acceptable authentication protocols to replace the original signatures now required.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The use of electronic transmission and communication greatly enhanced the responsiveness and timeliness of the religious representative registry, particularly in the processing of temporary registrations often required on short notice.
FUTURE PLANS	This initiative is complete.

4.3.2. Marriage Commissioners

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency continued to monitor the number of Marriage Commissioners in each community to ensure availability and a choice of individuals available to couples seeking their services. In addition, the Agency will look for methods that will attract those individuals with computer skills and Internet access into the program. With a number of long-service Marriage Commissioners beginning to retire from the program, the Agency felt it appropriate that a Service Recognition Award be designed.
WHAT WE DID	In an effort to attract individuals who are computer literate and have the skills to utilize basic web services, the Agency changed its recruitment practices. Although we continue to advertise the opening in local area newspapers, we now refer the interested individual to our website for further information and application. In addition, greater emphasis is now given to those candidates who indicate that they have computer equipment at their disposal as well as Internet access.

In addition, all new hires now submit a photo of themselves to be utilized for the newly created photo identification card that is provided to all Marriage Commissioners.

As planned, a Service Recognition Award was designed and is now being distributed to individuals as they retire.

In July of 2003 same-sex marriage became an option in British Columbia. Comprehensive communications were made with both Marriage Licence Issuers and Marriage Commissioners to ensure that they had the most up to date and accurate information as the matter was reviewed by the courts. The speed of information dissemination by way of e-mail notices proved to be extremely successful.

WHAT THIS MEANS

As the Agency continues to seek individuals who are familiar with Internet access, the comfort of Marriage Commissioners posting their e-mail addresses and photo's continues to grow. The ability for couples to view a photograph of whom they will be hiring to perform their ceremony provides a greater comfort level in their selection as well as provides a method for identifying the Marriage Commissioner at the ceremony itself when the couple has never physically met with the Commissioner.

FUTURE PLANS

The Agency continues to investigate the viability of an on-line registry program whereby the Marriage Commissioners would, through a secure site, enter the details of the marriage, prior to forwarding the registration document itself.

We will also continue with our new recruitment process to attract individuals who have computer and Internet access.

4.3.3. Marriage Licence Issuers

WHAT WE PLANNED

The Agency continues to strive towards developing an electronic interface between its private service providers and the Agency. A detailed business analysis relating to such an electronic interface was identified as being a first step towards a web-based program.

WHAT WE DID

With the development of the government WEB Portal Project plans for an exclusive link into the Agency's web was placed on hold to determine how, or if, it was practical to continue forward with this alternative delivery method.

With same-sex marriage becoming an option in British Columbia, it was important that Marriage Licence Issuers were continually updated with the information and procedures that they would need to accommodate same-sex couples wishing to purchase licences. In addition, all printed information needed to be updated to be both informative as to new processes and be gender neutral.

WHAT THIS MEANS

As a result of being unable to move to an on-line registry program the Agency was not able to achieve any further decrease in the time it takes to register a marriage event.

By using e-mail addresses the Agency was able to disseminate information pertaining to policy changes in a timely fashion, for example the policy relating to same-sex marriages. The use of e-mail to disseminate information will now be the first source, and first choice, of communication with our service providers.

FUTURE PLANS

The Agency continues to explore opportunities to utilize web application for the collection of information. One proposal under review relates to the ability to make an initial application for a marriage licence through the web. This proposal would still call for the witnessing of signatures prior to marriage but would allow for those couples who are outside of British Columbia, but wishing to be married in British Columbia, to obtain the initial licence at their convenience and arrange for signature witnessing as their time permits.

4.3.4. Marriage Certificates

WHAT WE DID

With the implementation of same-sex marriages it was necessary to redesign the Agency's marriage documents to remove the reference to bridegroom and bride. The marriage certificate was one of many documents needing redesign so as not to reference the titles of bride or bridegroom.

WHAT THIS MEANS

Same-sex couples now receive legal marriage certificates that do not contain erroneous titles.

FUTURE PLANS

Once the old stock of marriage certificates has been utilized, new stock, which no longer provides "prompts" of bride and bridegroom, will be the norm for all marriage events.

Should new legislation be introduced which provides for "titles", these could be accommodated by alterations to the VISION computer system and be incorporated into a print function.

4.4. CHANGE OF NAME REGISTRY

4.4.1. Change of Name Processing

WHAT WE PLANNED	With the implementation of heightened security issues, the Agency wished to enter into discussions with federal officials to both confirm security features relating to the new residency card as well as other documentation issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Coupled with this discussion, would be the topic of providing notification to CIC of all registered immigrants who have completed a legal name change in British Columbia.
WHAT WE DID	It was recognized that with the implementation of the new residency card, CIC focused its energy with the timely and efficient issuance of these identity documents to new residents of Canada. Discussions specific to name change notification did not take place at this time.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The Agency maintains its commitment to notify other jurisdictions of name changes and will continue to actively pursue the exchange of information with CIC.
FUTURE PLANS	With the implementation of the Residency Card, the Agency may move to only accept this document as evidence of one's identity when attempting to change their name. The Agency will continue to seek contact with CIC to gain support for information sharing. A means for introduction of this exchange of information may be through the federal government National Routing System project.

4.4.2. Archiving Supporting Documents

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency intended to undertake a business analysis of the application of digitizing change of name files for the quick and easy access by staff as required.
WHAT WE DID	With staff resources still unavailable for the analysis of this project, in-house testing of digitizing records was not done. Agency registration audit staff was provided with scanning equipment in order that they could now scan requests for

	copies of registration documents and provide them by e-mail. This process has seen a decrease in delivery time and paper use.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Staff is now seeing a reduced timeframe for the delivery of registrations and supporting documents from the records management area.
FUTURE PLANS	As the requirement for return of archived name change is minimal, the project of digit imaging of this type of registration will no longer be pursued.

4.4.3. Reports to External Registries

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency supports electronic notification of name change and envisioned dissemination of information utilizing the proposed National Routing System.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency supported the National Routing System, however as funding was not available through the Vital Statistics Council the process of name change notification via the proposed electronic system was not forthcoming. Notification of name change to all provincial authorities will continue on a regular basis in the current manner.
WHAT THIS MEANS	By ensuring that other vital statistics jurisdictions have up-to-date information their records become less subject to illegal activities.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency continues to support the timely electronic delivery of shared information with other provincial and federal jurisdictions. In support of the federal governments "E-Link Project", the Agency has indicated its willingness to enter into the pilot project.

4.4.4. Gazetteer of Change of Name

WHAT WE PLANNED	With the approval of the Privacy Commissioner, the Agency would amend legislation to allow electronic "publication" of name change for access by prescribed clients. The requirement for persons and the Agency to advertise name changes in the BC Gazette would no longer exist.

WHAT WE DID	Legislation was amended, eliminating the requirement to publish name changes in the BC Gazette. A survey was conducted to determine if outside agencies had regularly viewed the notices previously published by the Agency. Although the level of interest was minimal, an electronic extract will be made available upon request from a firm once they have been accredited by the Agency.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Name change applicants no longer are required to publish in either the BC Gazette or local area newspaper which has resulted in lower costs, in most cases, to the clients themselves. For those businesses who routinely reviewed the notice of name changes, an electronic extract can be made available upon request once accredited by the Agency.
FUTURE PLANS	This initiative met all objectives in 2001/02.

4.5. WILLS NOTICE REGISTRY

4.5.1. Registration of Wills Notices

WHAT WE PLANNED	To increase the electronic filing and registration of Wills Notices, the Agency planned for receipt of 30,000 documents through electronic transmission and 10,000 through a secure Web application. The Agency will undertake a review and discussion with appropriate areas of a possible legislative change for the mandatory filing of the Registration of Wills Notice forms for those wills that are prepared by legal professionals.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency received and registered a total of 21,961 Wills Notices electronically through Access BC and the remainder being submitted through the mail. A review was undertaken and discussions were held, however, support was not obtained to undertake legislative changes surrounding the requirements of mandatory filing of Registration of Wills Notice forms for those wills prepared by a legal professional.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Wills Notice electronic submissions did not increase to the levels originally forecasted by the Agency. While the legal profession continued to expand its use of this "portal access" alternative, many offices remained with the use of paper mail as their preferred method of submission. Proposed legislative changes were not accepted for the mandatory filing of the Registration of Wills Notice forms for those wills that are prepared by legal professionals.

FUTURE PLANS

The Agency will focus on maintaining the turnaround time for the registration of a Wills Notice at two days by reviewing and streamlining workflow processes. The Agency will also continue to work with Access BC to promote the increase in the use of this on-line system for submission of Wills Notice Registrations.

4.5.2. Wills Notice Searches

WHAT WE PLANNED

To increase the electronic filing of Wills Notice Searches, the Agency planned for receipt of 8,000 such submissions, electronically through the Access BC, and a further 3,000 through the secure Web application. In 2003/04 the Agency plans to implement the production of the Search of Wills Notice Summary Document. This document will assist with the further streamlining of the workflow processes in providing this service.

WHAT WE DID

The Agency received a total of 6,495 Wills Notice Searches (53 percent) through the Access BC and the remainder through the mail.

Legislation requires the Provincial Probate Courts to notify Vital Statistics when letters of probate or letters of administration have been granted. On receipt of the notification, the Agency is required to set the applicable Wills Notices in the Wills Registry system to a 'probated' status. Previously the process to change a Wills Notice status to 'probated' was conducted manually. To efficiently handle the volumes received from the Probate Courts, an offsite data entry program was developed. Probated Wills Notices are now entered offsite, the information is transmitted to VISION and the associated Wills Notices in the Wills Registry system is set to 'Probated'.

WHAT THIS MEANS

While half of all Wills Notice Search applications were received electronically, electronic submissions did not reach the level originally forecasted by the Agency. The majority of those submitting search requests continued to do so using paper mail.

FUTURE PLAN

In 2004/05 the Agency will initiate discussions with the Provincial Probate Court to establish production of a document that will summarize the results of a Search of Wills Notice request. The Agency will also continue to work with Access BC, to increase the use of the on-line

system for submission of Search of Wills Notice applications.

4.5.3. Wills Notice Storage & Retrieved

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Vital Statistics Agency will continue to receive Wills Notices forms and ensure that they are recorded in the registry and microfilmed. The use of digital imaging technology as an alternative electronic storage medium will be explored. The Agency will focus on the automation of the production of Wills Notice Registration forms from microfilm through the development of an electronic extract from VISION for Wills Notices with complete registration details.
WHAT WE DID	Business analysis was carried out for the development of an electronic extract from VISION for Wills Notices including the complete registration details. The Wills Registry has complete Wills Notice Registration details from 1993 to date. Through the development of an electronic extract from VISION the requirement to refer to microfilm for Search of Wills Notice applications could be reduced by 20 percent.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The utilization of the electronic extracts from VISION could provide an effective solution for the automation of processing Search of Wills Notice results. This currently is a repetitive manual process.
FUTURE PLANS	To further enhance the efficiency of this process, in 2004/05 the Agency will initiate discussions with the Provincial Probate Court with plans to implement the production of the Search of Wills Notice Summary Document and utilize the electronic extract format for Wills Notices with complete registration details. The combination of these changes and the utilization of VISION generated forms will further streamline and reduce the requirement for manual intervention in the preparation of Search of Wills Notice requests.

5. SUPPORT SERVICES STRATEGY

5.1. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND MEASUREMENT

5.1.1. Performance Measurement

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to develop new performance measures to better reflect the Agency's redefined goals and better support initiatives of the Ministry and government. Our original plan was to focus on internal performance, specifically STIIP monitoring and certificate replacements.
WHAT WE DID	Reorganization of the Ministry and changes in the goals and objectives of the Agency resulted in a total review of Agency strategy, its planning process and how its measures successful performance. During fiscal 2003/2004 the Agency developed a new Financial and Operational Plan incorporating many new measures linked to the goals and objectives of the Agency.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The Agency continues to be a leader in the development and implementation of performance management in government. The new Financial and Operational Plan links the activities of the Agency to its goals and objectives in such fashion that all Agency employees can connect the work they do to the goals and objectives of Agency, Ministry and government. We believe this makes our employees far more effective in meeting their own objectives in the workplace as well as the objectives of the program and government.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency plans to monitor the effectiveness of its new measures and adjust accordingly. Measures proven successful to date will be maintained and monitored for their continuing effectiveness.

5.1.2. Financial and Performance Reporting

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to prepare quarterly financial and performance forecasts for Treasury Board Staff as well as to prepare and distribute this annual Financial and Performance report to report on results outputs and outcomes on an annual basis.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency prepared and submitted all reports as required as well as meeting all the reporting requirements of government during and concluding the 2003/2004 fiscal years.

WHAT THIS MEANS	The Agency has met its objectives and obligations related to financial and performance reporting.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to meet its reporting plan as well as the reporting requirements of government and will continue to seek ways to enhance content and access to its financial and performance reports. The Agency has developed a new Financial and Operational Plan for fiscal 2004/05 through fiscal 2006/07 and will implement a new report format to conform to new reporting requirements of government and the content of the new plan.

5.2. HISTORICAL VITAL EVENT RECORDS

5.2.1. Release of Historical Vital Event Records

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to prepare microfilm copies and related vital events indexes to ensure that vital event records can be released in the year in which they are eligible for such release. Birth records could be released 100 years after the birth event; marriage records 75 years after the marriage event, and death records 20 years after the death event. The Agency plans to oversee the completion of the second phase of the on-line index for baptismal records from 1837 to 1900.
WHAT WE DID	Information on births up to and including those in 1903, marriages to 1928 and deaths to 1983 are now available in select libraries, at the British Columbia Archives Reading Room, and through the Genealogical Society of Utah. All of these events may be searched on the Internet using the vital records index search facilities on the BC Archives Web site. The public may also purchase genealogy certificates directly through our Agency. Through a partnership with BC Archives and VitalChek Network these records are also available for purchase by credit card and delivery by e-mail. The second phase of the on-line index for baptismal records is 70 percent completed. The indexing progressed slower than originally anticipated due to the difficulty of carefully transcribing handwritten French and Latin records. These records, stored on microfilm have faded considerably over time.

WHAT THIS MEANS	Vital event records were released in accordance to prescribed legislation and are readily available to the public through the Internet. Microfilms of the original vital event documents are available for purchase at cost by libraries, genealogical societies and the public. The indexing of baptismal records is over 70 percent complete. Completion of this project is important in order to provide British Columbians and researchers throughout Canada improved access to baptism/birth information particularly as they relate to First Nations individuals and births prior to the commencement of vital events registrations in 1872.
FUTURE PLANS	To continue maintaining microfilm records and vital event indexes as required and to ensure that vital event records can be released in the year they are eligible for release. To oversee the completion of the second phase for the recording of baptismal records information into an index format.

5.2.2. Restoration of Historical Indices

WHAT WE PLANNED	During 1997/98 it was discovered that tapes containing indexes to historical birth records from 1900 to 1930 had been damaged. The Agency plans to continue the restoration of the damaged indexes for the period 1919 to 1929 utilizing available resources within the work unit. Work will be undertaken to locate and analyze Death and Marriage indexes from 1900 to 1930. Depending on the availability of this information, these indexes can then be loaded into VISION.
WHAT WE DID	Extensive searching by Information and Resource Management located backup historical research tapes for death and marriage indexes from 1900 to 1930. It was determined the indexes contained on these tapes were of sufficient detail and contained the required elements to allow this information to be loaded directly onto VISION.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The restoration of these indexes has completed the entire marriage and death registry index for VISION and has virtually eliminated the requirement to refer to microfiche to locate a death or marriage event.
FUTURE PLANS	There are no further requirements to be fulfilled for this objective as the restoration of the birth, death and marriage indexes for the period 1900 to 1930 have been completed.

5.2.3. Historical Birth and Death Project

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency will complete the data entry of required certificate information for births back to 1940 to facilitate automated birth certificate production. The emphasis will then shift to death records to enable a further expansion of the automated matching of death event information to birth records. The Agency will initiate a project to capture the required information for matching purposes and will work with the other provinces/territories in Canada along with staff from Statistics Canada to obtain the necessary death information relating to British Columbia born individuals on file in Ottawa.
WHAT WE DID	Discussions were held with the provinces and territories to establish data content and frequency for the exchange of death registration information within Canada. Agreement was reached for providing a consistent standard among the provinces for the exchange of death information. Business analysis was carried out for the automation of the birth/death linking process. The intention of this project is to improve data linkage, eliminate paper reports and make the information electronically accessible if manual intervention is required.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The exchange of death registration information and flagging of the registration of birth is a major step towards the prevention of fraudulent use of identities. The automation of birth/death linkage will streamline business workflow processes, improve and strengthen data linkages within VISION.
FUTURE PLANS	Death registrations for the period 1930 to 1984 require additional data entry of key registration information to ensure electronic matching of birth to death records on VISION. Work will continue with the provinces and territories along with staff from Statistics Canada to obtain the necessary death information relating to British Columbia born individuals on file in Ottawa. Out of province death information is required so data verification matching can occur to ensure all out of province death indicators have been set against the associated birth records. Implementation for the full computer automation of birth/death linking will occur next fiscal year.

5.2.4. Data Quality Initiatives

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Registration Audit Unit planned to develop processes for the early detection of errors and the introduction of appropriate education and information actions to reduce the number of errors received on registration documents. The Agency will continue to move forward on the initiative for electronic transmission of Notice of Birth information with those hospitals and regional districts that are interested in supporting these functions.
WHAT WE DID	Additional on-line management reports were developed within VISION to further monitor data quality and registration turnaround times. Registrations where it is identified the data quality has not reached 'certificate quality' status within 25 days from the date of event are analyzed, corrected, and if necessary appropriate follow-up is undertaken with Vital Statistics Registrars, Service Providers and medical professionals.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The implementation of these data quality edit checks will identify repetitive errors in the registration process and will provide assistance in reducing turnaround times. The result is more accurate data available sooner for both the Agency and our clients. However, overall support was not obtained from the hospitals and regional districts to continue with the electronic transmission of Notice of Birth Information Project as resources for these groups have been directed towards improving patient care as apposed to streamlining administrative functions.
FUTURE PLANS	To continue to monitor document submissions and to take appropriate corrective action to reduce the number of invalid data elements on vital event documents received by the Agency. The Agency will continue to explore the concept of a web-interface for services providers in accordance with applicable guidelines of the E-Government Initiatives program under the province's Chief Information Office for the electronic transmission of information.

5.3. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

5.3.1. Transfer Payroll Function from Ministry of Health

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to transfer payroll activities from the Ministry to establish full financial independence.

WHAT WE DID	Discussions with the Ministry's Senior Financial Officers were undertaken however, the government initiative to centralize the entire government payroll function overtook these efforts.
WHAT THIS MEANS	As payroll has now been centralized as part of the Ministry of Management Services our objective has been partially met as the Agency will be independent of the Ministry of Health Services for payroll services.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will utilize the payroll services as provided by the Ministry of Management Services.

5.3.2. Policy and Procedure Documentation

WHAT WE PLANNED	Agency plans included bringing its internal financial policy and procedure documentation up-to-date to reflect the implementation of new government financial management initiatives.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency aligned its internal procedures with the new CORE policy manual of government and maintained compliance with the Central Agency financial policy requirements.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The Agency continues to be on track in implementing government financial initiatives and ensuring that they are properly documented to form an integral part of Agency operations. As government financial policy and financial management practice evolves the documentation project has become an ongoing effort.
FUTURE PLANS	The unit will continue to identify areas where written procedures are required and review activities to ensure written documentation reflects actual or required practice. There will be a focus on ensuring Agency procedures continue to reflect Core Policy Manual requirements and in turn to connect our program managers to government policy.

5.3.3. E-Commerce

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to promote the use of e-commerce and other alternative payment processes for its services in order to reduce reliance on the acceptance of personal cheques for payment. (Personal cheque processing and the dealing with NSF cheques are labour intensive and costly.)

WHAT WE DID	Promotion of the acceptance of credit cards and debit cards, the acceptance of applications over the phone, by facsimile and through Access BC has resulted in payment by personal cheque being utilized in only 33 percent of the Agency's service transactions.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Fewer cheques requiring processing results in somewhat less related work. The incidence of NSF cheques decreased initially, however this has now stabilized and the incidence of NSF cheques now appears to be constant.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to promote alternate methods of payment until it becomes feasible to restrict acceptance of personal cheques for services requested.

5.4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND CONFIDENTIAL SERVICES

5.4.1. Human Resources/ Confidential Services

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to establish independent human resources services to promote a more effective delivery of corporate policies and procedures for recruitment, classification, labour relations and occupational health and safety.
WHAT WE DID	The manager responsible continued to apply human resources best practices in the delivery of client services to all Agency personnel. Shared services of the Human Resources function was created to increase efficiency and improve service delivery for clientele. This was done within the independence afforded a Special Operating Agency and complimentary to goals of the British Columbia Public Service Agency.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The first year working under the shared services model was shaped by ongoing workforce adjustment activities and organizational changes but was found to be satisfactory for the limited services required.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to move toward increased efficiencies within the shared services model of Human Resources service delivery within constraints established by the British Columbia Public Service Agency.

5.4.2. Consolidation of Adoption Indices

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Confidential Services Branch planned on linking all adoption indices through the creation of a unified MS Excel

	database to allow the efficient retrieval of adoption related statistics that enhance the ability of the Agency to respond to information requests from a variety of clientele.
WHAT WE DID	Although initiated in fiscal 1999/00, this remains an ongoing project. There are approximately 70,000 records relating to adoption, however, dedicated resources are not available due to budgetary constraints.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Adoption records maintained by the Agency are intact but have been recorded in a variety of formats. While this does not affect the operations or delivery of services to Agency clientele, it does impact the extent to which statistical analysis can be performed.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency has made a commitment to link all adoption indices back to 1980 within existing resources. To date, only four years still remain outstanding.

6. REGIONAL SERVICES STRATEGY

6.1. SERVICE DELIVERY AND EFFICIENCY

6.1.1. Community Service Levels

WHAT WE PLANNED

The Agency will continue to evaluate alternatives for service delivery and will actively explore the use of private sector service providers throughout the province.

WHAT WE DID

During the 2003/2004 fiscal year the following service provider appointments were made to enhance and maintain local community service levels and accommodate routine turnover of appointees and new recruitments.

- 33 new Funeral Service Provider staff appointed as Vital Statistics Registrars
    - enable deaths to be registered in the community on a timely basis – in many cases providing service on a seven day per week, twenty-four hour a day basis.
- 35 Government Agent staff appointments (Vital Statistics Registrar & Marriage Licence Issuer)
    - service providers located in established Government Agent officers ensure that clients can obtain vital statistics services in their home communities.
- 194 Private Marriage Licence Issuers
    - many of the new appointments maintained expanded service hours in the Victoria and Greater Vancouver areas
- 30 Private Marriage Commissioners
    - ensure efficient service delivery to couples in their home locales and at a time that best meets their needs and wishes.
- 115 Temporary Marriage Commissioners

WHAT THIS MEANS

The Vital Statistics Agency has continued to promote and maintain the appointment of local private sector service providers where possible in order to expand the availability of services.

FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to pursue public/private partnerships and monitor and maintain established service levels as a means to fulfill its legislative mandate, while being fiscally responsible and sensitive to the needs of the public.

6.1.2. Alternative Service Delivery Sources

WHAT WE PLANNED	In keeping with the Provincial Government's Public, Private Partnership Initiative, the Agency continues to partner with non-government offices such as notaries and insurance issuers to provide marriage licence issuance services. To ensure services are available to new parents we also planned to provide birth registrations on-line for parents to complete, print, and submit.
WHAT WE DID	Numerous private offices have been appointed as marriage licence issuance offices providing extended hours of services for couples seeking licences in the provinces. Birth registrations, as well as the most commonly used forms are now available on our Internet site in a downloadable format.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The registration of birth or issuance of a marriage licence services provided by the Agency are becoming easier for clients to obtain outside of standard working hours/days.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency continues to explore opportunities to utilize web applications for both the dissemination and collection of information. The ability to collect birth registrations via facsimile directly from parents is under consideration with legibility being a major concern.

6.1.3. VitalChek

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency and its partners plan to continue marketing the ordering of certificates by telephone and Internet using the VitalChek credit card payment option. In addition the Agency planned to promote the extension of this service for customers wishing to purchase digital copies of historical records through electronic ordering and delivery over the Internet.

WHAT WE DID	In cooperation with VitalChek, all historical records birth (1872 to 1903), along with death records (1872 to 1983), marriage records (1872 to 1928), are available over the Internet. Requests submitted using secure WEB interfaces are processed and the resulting TIF images returned by e-mail to the client regardless of their location throughout the world the 'next business day'.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Vital event records are released in accordance to prescribed legislation and are readily available to the public through the Internet using a modern electronic medium. The volume of digital image sales remain consistent with last fiscal year with a notable exception of an increase in activity each January. This increase is due to the release of another year of historical event information made available at the beginning of each year.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to work with VitalChek to ensure service is expanded as additional years of vital event records become available for release.

6.2. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

6.2.1. Millennium Certificates

WHAT WE PLANNED	Commemorative certificates will continue to be released to eligible parties as requested and the Agency will continue to look for similar special occasion opportunities to meet its customer's needs.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency provided special certificates as requested. Analysis determined that no new initiatives were practical at this time.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Special commemorative certificates (for persons born or married in the Year 2000) are available on request.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to look for similar special occasion opportunities, such as 2010 Olympic certificates, to meet its customer's needs. However, the specific objectives of this initiative have been met. This initiative met all objectives in 2001/02.

6.2.2. Commemorative Marriage Certificates

WHAT WE PLANNED	Pending legislative approval of an enhanced release authority, the Agency will investigate and initiate a

	marketing campaign to promote the availability and desirability of commemorative marriage certificates.
WHAT WE DID	No action was taken as certificate and form design priorities were focused on accommodating the recognition of same-sex marriages.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The limited interest expressed in the commemorative marriage certificates issued during the year 2000 and the very few commemorative special event certificates issued to date indicate that further expenditures in this area would not be warranted.
FUTURE PLANS	This initiative is considered complete.

6.2.3. Marriage Commissioner's Marriage Ceremony Memento

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency will continue to monitor comments received from Marriage Commissioners and newlywed couples to determine if a consensus for further change can be identified. The possibility of Marriage Commissioners preparing mementos on a customized basis will be reviewed over the coming year.
WHAT WE DID	A survey of all Marriage Commissioners showed 88% of the Commissioners preferred to keep the same size, content and style of the existing Statement of Marriage. Interest in a customized alternative was limited at this time.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Both the commissioners and marriage participants appear to be satisfied with the current system.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to monitor input from the Marriage Commissioners with regard to all aspects of the program. This will include a review of the content of civil ceremony itself to ensure that it reflects appropriate language forms consistent with the racial mosaic of British Columbia. This initiative was closed in 2001/2002

6.2.4. Partnership Registry

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency will monitor trends in the evolution of the family structure as it is recognized in Canada and will continue to respond to the legislative priority of the government with a view to introducing options that may be appropriate for British Columbia

WHAT WE DID	As a result of the British Columbia Court of Appeals removing the prohibition on same-sex marriages, giving same-sex couples in British Columbia the right to marry, the Agency commenced registration of same-sex marriages after July 8, 2003.
WHAT THIS MEANS	At present there is no requirement for the development of a partnership registry.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to monitor the evolution of the family structure as it is recognized in Canada both by the courts and by Parliament.

6.2.5. Plastic (credit card type) Birth Certificates

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to investigate the implementation of plastic birth certificates similar in physical appearance to credit cards or drivers licences. Security features, including picture identification, similar to drivers licences would be considered.
WHAT WE DID	We found that Australia is producing picture ID birth certificates. While this option continues to be an area the Agency is considering there are significant concerns that picture ID birth certificates will prove to be inconvenient and costly due to the need to regularly update the picture. In addition discussions with other provinces indicate little interest elsewhere, though there is interest in moving from paper to polymer based certificate stock, as it is far more durable and facilitates the implementation of new security features.
WHAT THIS MEANS	At present the business case does not support picture birth certificates.
FUTURE PLANS	We will continue to participate in discussions on identity at the national level, review the literature on incorporating biometrics in identity documents and participate with other members of the Vital Statistics Council for Canada in identifying improvements to certificate stock.

6.2.6. Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Telephone System

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to investigate the use of IVR to allow clients the ability to report lost and stolen certificates.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency reviewed the Government of British Columbia initiative associated with IVR and found that the limited

	advances in IVR technology to date have not been sufficient to warrant investment by the Agency at this time.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The Agency will not be implementing IVR as a solution to the reporting of the lost and stolen certificate in the near future.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to monitor changes in technology for future system enhancements.

6.2.7. Central Clearinghouse Function

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to investigate the feasibility of developing a process whereby parents who require birth certificates for more than one province would be able to obtain them through the completion of a single application form.
WHAT WE DID	The central clearinghouse function will be pursued under a national proposal.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The National Routing system would allow each provincial jurisdiction to electronically deposit and retrieve vital event information from a central storage database and could include application information.
FUTURE PLANS	The clearinghouse initiative is no longer required, as the National Routing System Project addresses the same objectives. This initiative was closed in 2001/2002.

6.2.8. Validation of birth certificates

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to conduct pilot projects with agencies such as Passport Canada and Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) to electronically validate information contained on British Columbia birth certificates presented as part of applications for services to these agencies.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency and Passport Canada successfully piloted the electronic validation of British Columbia birth certificates presented at the Victoria Passport Office for a three-month period in the summer/fall of 2003. Work was begun on a similar pilot with HRDC.

WHAT THIS MEANS	The Vital Statistics Agency and Passport Canada have proven the concept of electronic validation of identity documents. The pilot results show that it is feasible for any organization that depends on foundation identity documents, for example birth certificates, to validate the document electronically in real time with the source of the document. The pilot also identified areas where processes and data improvements can be made to enhance the feasibility of large-scale validation programs.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to work with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) to develop a similar pilot as well as with other federal and provincial agencies to develop systems for validating British Columbia certificates.

6.2.9. Marriage Commissioner Selection and Training

WHAT WE PLANNED	As an ongoing task, the Agency monitors the number of Marriage Commissioners in the field to ensure that availability and choice is afforded to all clientele. With the policy changes as well as introduction of same-sex marriages, the Agency recognized the need for the updating of our guidebook.
WHAT WE DID	With the implementation of same-sex marriage clear lines of communication were required to ensure that the Marriage Commissioners understand their responsibilities and how a service is to be provided to all couples. With the use of email addresses we were able to disseminate information quickly to all service providers.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The quick and clear distribution of information ensured that all service providers were prepared for changes that would be highly visible in the public eye. We are able to ensure that all involved understood their role.
FUTURE PLANS	We will continue to hire individuals who have Internet access and computer skills. All forms and brochures will be updated and printed providing gender-neutral information. All Marriage Commissioner applicants will be screened to ensure compliance with new eligibility rules. Commissioners will be trained on appropriate alternative marriage vows until such time as direction has been given

and the Agency can update and reprint the Marriage Commissioner Guidebook.

6.3. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

6.3.1. Legislative Review

WHAT WE PLANNED

The Agency plans to review all aspects of the current statutory information release and access provisions of the Vital Statistics Act in order to identify legislative amendments necessary to accommodate security initiatives and recommendations of such bodies as the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Identity and the Security Committee of the Vital Statistics Council for Canada.

In addition, the Agency will be reviewing the *Marriage Act* in accordance with its established three-year de-regulation plan.

WHAT WE DID

Changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* were drafted and approved by the Government Legislative Review and Caucus Committees for inclusion in the Spring 2004 legislative session. Initial proposals for amendments to the *Marriage Act* were deferred by the Ministry for consideration in the following year.

The substantive changes proposed for the *Vital Statistics Act* are summarized below:

- a new provision for the making of an order respecting a child's name in conjunction with a court paternity order added in response to a Supreme Court of Canada decision;
- de-regulation initiative amendment to allow the registration of a stillbirth by a third-party on behalf of the parent(s);
- de-regulation initiative to allow appeals of both refusal and acceptance of vital event registrations by the CEO;
- amend release provisions for birth and marriage certificates and certified copies of birth, death, and marriage registrations to enhance security and establish government program document validation protocols. Amendments proposed in response to national identity document security initiatives while incorporating

freedom of information and protection of privacy principles;

- enhance authority of the CEO to cancel and order the return of certificates to ensure that incorrect, invalid or fraudulently obtained documents cannot be used;
- increase fine for failure to supply information or surrender documents;
- add a regulation creating the authority to establish a means for statutory restrictions or prohibitions on the use of vital event certificates or classes of certificates should such regulations be required.

WHAT THIS MEANS

The major legislative initiatives reflect the importance placed by the government on reinforcing and securing those means by which the people of British Columbia establish their identities and subsequently their rights and benefits as citizens.

It is anticipated that the amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* will provide both statutory flexibility and enhanced security for maintaining and protecting the province's vital event registries.

FUTURE PLANS

The Agency will review the *Marriage Act* to identify legislative changes required to address outstanding issues associated with the legal recognition of same-sex marriages and identity recording when issuing marriage licences.

6.3.2. Guidebooks

WHAT WE PLANNED

In light of numerous legislative changes that have taken place, the review and/or update of all guidebooks will be undertaken. It was, and remains to be, the intent of the Agency to provide new guidebooks to all service providers.

WHAT WE DID

Although initial reviews took place, as additional legislation is expected to be introduced with the spring sitting of the legislature, finalization of existing guides was placed on hold.

Wherever possible, information to supplement guidebooks is published on the Agency web site.

WHAT THIS MEANS	Changes to process and legislation continued to be disseminated to service providers in a timely fashion as and when required.
FUTURE PLANS	Guidebooks will be revisited to ensure that they reflect the most up to date and correct information. Wherever possible guides will be provided in CD ROM form either on its own or as part of a software installation packages such as the Marriage Licence Issuer Program.

6.4. AUDIT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

6.4.1. Surveys/Customer Satisfaction

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to continue utilizing the existing Customer Satisfaction Surveys as a method for monitoring service and products. The production of an on-line survey form was contemplated.
WHAT WE DID	Survey forms continued to be distributed reaching approximately 25 percent of our clients. This equates to approximately 2600 surveys sent out each month with 170 to 200 being returned. Clients who provided their telephone number or address with their response were contacted by an Assistant Regional Manager to ascertain that every effort on our part has been made to ensure that customer satisfaction is achieved. The production of an on-line survey form was reviewed but not implemented as there was concern that too narrow an audience may be targeted.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Clients are aware their satisfaction is important to us; they appreciate that we consistently strive to make services available while maintaining security of their identity information. The Agency has continued to collect customer satisfaction information that is comparable to prior years.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency continues to review our "paper" survey to ensure that the questions included are appropriate and capture the method in which service was provided and where applicable, satisfaction levels associated with client interaction with staff.

6.4.2. Data Standards and Quality/Edit Checks

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency plans to continue with its current activities directed toward data quality improvement through the life of this business plan. With the implementation of the new Data Warehouse, there will be expanded capabilities to use electronic edit checks to identify erroneous data.
WHAT WE DID	Weekly edit checks continued to be made of all key data elements collected by the Agency. Using these in-depth analysis reports, staff can concentrate their efforts on the problems so identified, and to undertake corrections in a timely fashion. Data validation rules have been implemented in the Data Warehouse, but reporting evaluation results has not yet been implemented, as this requires setting up additional reporting software.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Pre-vetting of documents and direct liaison with hospital personnel, physicians and coroners has greatly reduced the error ratio on key data elements in vital events. The result is more accurate data available sooner for use both internally within the Agency and for our clients who use this data in their day-to-day work activities.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to expand and refine data validation and cross-correlation edit check rules. Liaison with reporting sources will continue to improve the timeliness, accuracy and completeness of data provided. Formal data exchange arrangements with external data sources that capture the same or related data will be used to confirm and augment data held in the Agency's registries.

6.4.3. Performance Measurements

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency will continue to utilize its information systems, surveys of customer comments, and direct contact with both customers and service providers to continue to monitor performance. The Agency has developed detailed "goal posts" for all of its key business functions and has in place reporting mechanisms relative to each of these elements.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency continues to utilize all its existing measurement tools to assess Agency activities across the myriad of services provided. As new issues arise, detailed discussion is undertaken to identify appropriate goals and in turn associated measures against which these goals can be judged.

WHAT THIS MEANS	Overall the Agency has continued to meet and in most cases surpass the service and performance targets for the staff providing client services. Additional performance measures have reinforced the continued efficiency of the operation of the Agency along with the maintaining of overall very positive satisfaction level of our clients.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to monitor its stated service and performance objectives to ensure that despite restricted resources, the stated goals are met on an ongoing basis. Where appropriate additional measures and goals will be developed and implemented to continue the service excellence philosophy of the Agency.

6.4.4. Enforcement/Offence Provisions

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency will review the offence provisions in Vital Statistics legislation to determine whether existing compliance offence provisions warrant amendment to increase the penalty amounts beyond those currently stipulated at the default $2000 amount.
WHAT WE DID	An environmental survey was conducted to document the current Vital Statistics offence provisions across Canada. A legislative amendment to increase the offence provision fine from $2,000 to $50,000 was drafted and approved by the Government Legislative Review and Caucus Committees for inclusion in the Spring 2004 legislative session.
WHAT THIS MEANS	It is anticipated that passage of this amendment will provide the Agency with additional options for ensuring compliance with the provisions of the *Vital Statistics Act* while bringing this province in line with practices in other jurisdictions.
FUTURE PLANS	Passage of the proposed amendment will complete this item.

7. INFORMATION AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Chief Executive Officer of Vital Statistics is mandated by sections 43 and 44 of the *Vital Statistics Act* to publish and distribute statistical information in the public interest respecting the contents of the Agency's registries and to publish an annual statistical report on vital events registered during the preceding calendar year. The Manager, Information and Resource Management Branch, directs several small niche groups, each with its own area of expertise, but with overlapping responsibilities in the overall development of research products, to meet this legislated obligation.

The groups fall into general categories responsible for:

- Data management,
- Medical Coding,
- Data Analysis,
- Data Dissemination; and,
- Publication and Internet Services.

The major projects undertaken by these groups are documented on the following pages.

7.1. DATA WAREHOUSE PROJECT

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to expand external access of the data warehouse to a much larger group of external clients within Government using Oracle Web Agent as the primary delivery tool. The Oracle Discoverer End-User layer will be completed so that any ad hoc data request may be answered in-house using this tool. Marriage statistics will be added to data warehouse offerings. Summary data drawn from the Health Status Registry will be made available from the data warehouse. Maps of the health regions will be added to the Warehouse end-user tool set. The data warehouse will receive an upgrade to the Government's GAMES technology base and Oracle 9i.
WHAT WE DID	External users now include Medical Health Officers in every health authority across British Columbia, as well as researchers at Simon Fraser University, epidemiologists with the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control and others. Maps of the Regions are now a feature of the end-user tool set and are available for analysis of mortality and natality statistics. Work on the Oracle Discoverer End-User layer was suspended largely because purported features of the Oracle 9i did not work as expected. We upgraded the data warehouse and are now in full

production with VISTA2. VISTA2, the second generation of the warehouse database, is fully generated using the Government's GAME technology under Oracle 9i. We delayed the integration of the Health Status Registry information into the data warehouse because the Registry is undergoing redevelopment in Oracle.

WHAT THIS MEANS

More external users of the Province's vital event data are accessing state-of-the-art research tools via the World Wide Web. Medical Health Officers are readily able to examine emerging trends and measure the health status of British Columbians in ways never before possible. However, while Marriage Measures are an integral part of the Annual Report, there does not appear to be demand for it from users accessing the information through Vital Statistics Agency's VISTA warehouse. To ensure there is no adverse impact these particular measures are not available through VISTA at this time. Developing the Oracle Discoverer end-user toolset will enable the Vital Statistics Agency to respond to ad hoc queries more readily, encourage greater use of the Province's Vital Event data. We avoided major development costs by delaying the integration of the HSR into the data warehouse.

FUTURE PLANS

The Oracle Discoverer End-User toolset will be completed so that any ad hoc data request may be answered in-house using this tool. Additional statistical measures will be added to data warehouse offerings, as demand requires. The Health Status Registry will be integrated into the data warehouse as a reporting source, and summary statistical measures developed around this addition. Work will continue to enhance the utility of the Province's vital event data, and encourage its use to the betterment of all British Columbians.

7.2. MEDICAL CODING

WHAT WE PLANNED

The Medical Coding Unit planned to improve the data quality received on Medical Certificates of Death and Notices of Birth.

WHAT WE DID

Revision of the Physician/Coroner Handbook on Medical Certificate of Death and Stillbirth was completed as a reference for physicians and coroners. This will be available on the web. The Physician/Midwife Handbook was completed to aid in completing the Notice of Live Birth or Stillbirth form.

A new steering committee was established for the Health Status Registry. The committee reviewed and revised the list of appropriate conditions for the Health Status Registry (HSR).

The HSR computer system has been updated to an Oracle based system.

WHAT THIS MEANS

The Medical Coding Unit endeavours to provide the most complete and medically accurate data possible, to assist the Vital Statistics Agency in fulfilling its mandate to provide key statistics for end users.

FUTURE PLANS

The Agency will distribute the Physician/Midwife Handbook to appropriate physicians throughout the province.

The Medical Coding Unit will investigate the possibility of receiving electronic data from the coroner's offices.

7.3. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION

WHAT WE PLANNED

The primary focus for the data analysis and dissemination area was to continue efforts to maintain high quality vital event data and while incorporating new systems (primarily VISTA) in our data dissemination activities in order to improve our efficiency.

WHAT WE DID

The data analysis and dissemination area has continued its efforts to maintain top quality vital event data through its daily scrutinizing of coding software output and application of edit rules to improve data quality.

There have been continued advancements in the use of the VISTA data warehouse for day-to-day data production and dissemination activities, especially for the processing of ad hoc data requests. This has resulted in other Information and Resource Management personnel having increased availability to work on other projects.

In addition, there has been significant progress made in the registering and training of external users of VISTA, including Medical Health Officers, data analysis personnel from various provincial health authorities, Health Service Delivery Areas, individual hospitals and health surveillance organizations (e.g. British Columbia Centre for Disease Control) and academic organizations (e.g. Simon Fraser University).

Personnel from the data analysis and dissemination area have also collaborated on a number of intra- Ministry of Health Services and inter-ministry projects, lending clinical and classification skills to project development. A few examples of these include coding translation activities (International Classification of Diseases Version 9 to International Classification of Diseases Version 10 – CA) for development of British Columbia specific "Patient Safety Indicators"; contributing clinical knowledge in the expansion of "Conditions Amenable to Medical Treatment" code grouping; clinical and coding support for monitoring and expanding provincial Palliative Care programs, and collaboration with the Ministry for Children and Family Development in monitoring "Child and Youth in Care" mortality.

The data analysis and dissemination area continues to be actively involved in the preparation of various reports that present and analyze British Columbia's vital event data, including the following reports:

British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency, Ministry of Health Planning. *Selected Vital Statistics and Health Status Indicators: One Hundred Thirtieth Annual Report 2002.*

British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency, Ministry of Health Planning. *Pregnancy Counts and Rates by Age Groups by Health Region, British Columbia, 1993 to 2001 (with an updated release incl. 2002 data to be available shortly)*

Kierans, W. et al "Charting Birth Outcome in British Columbia: Determinants of Optimal Health and Ultimate Risk – an Expansion and Update". Released in 2003 as a "Special Report" under the auspices of BCVSA (this report is an update of one produced in 1993).

FUTURE PLANS

The data analysis and dissemination group will continue to monitor the quality of its products as the new systems evolve, to ensure its rigorous standards and efficiency are maintained. Production of data sets for all levels of government as well as academic and health researchers will comprise a central activity for this area

The data analysis and dissemination area will also continue to collaborate with other areas of the Ministry of Health

Services and other ministries to assist in monitoring programme efficacy and in the development of new initiatives.

7.4. DESKTOP AND INTERNET SERVICES

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Desktop and Internet Services Group will continue to support the Agency's publication requirements.
WHAT WE DID	This group coordinated the final presentation of all major publications of the Agency. Additionally all materials were prepared for electronic distribution on the Internet.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Having a single focal point for the creation of both electronic and traditional published material ensures a high standard of quality, consistency and efficiency.
FUTURE PLANS	The Desktop and Internet Services Group will continue to support the Agency's publication requirements.

8. LABOUR RELATIONS STRATEGY

The British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) represents the majority of employees within the Agency, while the British Columbia Nurses' Union (BCNU) represents a small number of Community Nurses. Each of these parties have their rights and responsibilities outlined in collective and component agreements that are made available to them upon employment within the Public Service.

In accordance with Section 2 of the British Columbia Labour Relations Code, the Agency encourages co-operative participation between the employer and employees' representative unions in resolving workplace issues, adapting to changes in the economy, developing workforce skills and promoting workplace productivity. To encourage the timely implementation of these objectives, the Agency has its own human resources manager to act as a conduit to address any issues and concerns between the employer and employees.

Specific goals attached to the maintenance of effective employee relations include:

- the responsible provision of collective agreement interpretation to all employees,
- the timely resolution of grievances where practical,
- the maintenance of strong working relationships with Union representatives,
- establishing a balance between corporate goals and employee well-being, and
- the ongoing requirement for clear lines of communication between the parties.

The Agency continued to follow the Labour Relations principles described above in fiscal 2003/2004.

9. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to create an environment of continuous learning by keeping current with new ideas and technology and by aligning individual training needs with corporate and departmental strategic plans.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency continued to administer the booking of employees for all training programs as required by management. This included budget administration, research into training requirements and determining availability of the appropriate resources. Budget expenditure continues to increase for specialized information technology training. The Agency also provided 75 percent reimbursement of tuition for those employees pursuing post-secondary education.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Since the elimination of the Agency's own training coordinator in 2002, the Human Resources coordinator position has maintained the required administrative functions. The need for an internal resource continues to exist to best address the unique requirements of Agency personnel. Information technology training remains a variable expenditure due to changes in developing technologies and the requirements of select Agency personnel to maintain current skills.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will employ the services of external vendors as required to meet specific program training needs and obtain generic training needs as provided through the centralized Public Service Agency.

10. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

The Information and Technology Unit manages development and maintains the information technology systems of the Agency. The Unit enables new and innovative business solutions through effective computer-based technology while ensuring security of the information for which the Agency is responsible. This includes:

- recommending standards related to the data application systems and technology,
- adherence to government prescribed standards and plans,
- monitoring and managing access to the Agency's systems and data to guarantee security and confidentiality,
- ensuring compliance with the Agency's legislated mandate,
- developing and maintaining application systems,
- acquiring and deploying technology,
- operating computers and networks,
- monitoring systems assets and expenditures,
- assisting staff and service providers with system issues and technology,
- taking a lead role in systems-related projects on behalf of other jurisdictions such a Statistics Canada and the Vital Statistics Council for Canada, and
- providing assistance in projects on behalf of the Ministry of Health Services

During fiscal 2003/04 the Information and Technology Unit maintained the major mission-critical operational system for the Agency (VISION), and the Agency's data warehouse (VISTA), while performing a number of enhancements to address security and processing requirements. Initiatives in the validation of electronic data from other government sources were also undertaken, and the infrastructures developed will accommodate expanded service in this area for future. At the same time, the unit continued to maintain several smaller applications in use by internal and external service providers.

During the period, the Information Technology unit worked on:

- 1,265 System Action Requests (SARs) related to business application and security issues,
- 225 SARs related to network and hardware requests, and
- 92 Change Requests (CRs) where changes were made to the business application systems.

10.1. VISION ENHANCEMENTS

10.1.1. Loading Historical Data

WHAT WE PLANNED	Based on funding priorities, the birth registrations from 1916 to 1929 will be data entered and loaded into VISION. Work will be undertaken to locate and analyze death and marriage indexes from 1900 to 1930. If the data can be found, then it will be loaded in VISION.

WHAT WE DID	An extensive search by Information and Resource Management located backup historical research tapes for death and marriage indexes from 1900 to 1930. It was determined the indexes contained on these tapes were of sufficient detail and contained the required elements, to allow this information to be loaded directly onto VISION.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The restoration of these indexes has completed the entire marriage and death registry index for VISION and has virtually eliminated the requirement to refer to microfiche to locate a death or marriage event.
FUTURE PLANS	The objective has been met.

10.1.2. Loading of Wills Probate Data

WHAT WE PLANNED	Loading of the backlog of probate information will be completed during fiscal 2003/2004. From then on, Wills Notices will be updated with the probate information as soon as they are received from the courts.
WHAT WE DID	A new offsite load process was created to add the probate information received from the Probate Court to the existing Wills Notices table.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Loading of the backlog of probate information was completed during fiscal 2003/2004.
FUTURE PLANS	This activity has met all objectives.

10.1.3. Direct Entry of British Columbia Online Wills Searches into VISION

WHAT WE PLANNED	This was a new project identified and initiated during the fiscal year.
WHAT WE DID	The existing BC Online Wills Search system was enhanced so that data entered during the day was loaded directly into VISION that night, bypassing offsite data entry.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Wills Searches entered through BC Online now are processed within 24 hours instead of within 3 days, and the offsite data entry costs have been eliminated.
FUTURE PLANS	This activity has met all objectives in 2002/03.

10.1.4. VISION Marketing

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to continue marketing VISION in cooperation with its private sector marketing partner to other American states and other countries included in the licence agreement.
WHAT WE DID	During fiscal 2003/2004, the Agency entered negotiations with the private sector partner and the Intellectual Property Program of the Ministry of Management Services to sell the VISION source code to the private sector partner.
WHAT THIS MEANS	If sold the private sector partner would own the VISION source code and provide the province with a perpetual licence for its use and sublicensing in Canada. The private sector partner would then make the investments necessary to expand the product's marketability in the United States. The province would continue to collect on existing sublicence agreements as well as receiving a small payment for title transfer.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will no longer be in the business of marketing the VISION system.

10.1.5. VISION Upgrade

WHAT WE PLANNED	Continue to upgrade the database as the software platform (Oracle) evolves and create the capability to have VISION available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for use both internally and by designated clients as funding becomes available.
WHAT WE DID	In 2002 all VISION databases were upgraded to Oracle9i in preparation for receiving birth certificate verification data. As a result of this upgrade, VISION is now available 18 hours a day, 7 days a week. An interface with the Ministry for Children and Family was built and same-sex marriage changes were accommodated.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The Ministry for Children and Family are now able to complete certificate requests and submit them electronically over the WEB, ensuring quick turnaround time on documents required for their client population. The legislative change to allow same-sex marriage required a large system enhancement. This was accomplished in a timely manner to ensure any delays in production of

marriage certificates were kept to a minimum so as not to incur hardship for newly married couples.

The client server-based VISION application cannot be upgraded with new oracle releases until the Agency upgrades to version 10g.

FUTURE PLANS

In 2003 the Oracle Corporation informed its client base that they would no longer be supporting forms on the 9i environment, therefore VISION will be upgraded to 10g and all clients will be moved from the client server environment to VISION on the WEB.

The Agency plans to enhance the linking of life events stored in VISION to facilitate the interfaces to the Ministry of Health Services Client Registry.

Plans to reduce reliance on offsite data capture by facilitating direct entry of death data from Funeral Homes into the VISION system by means of an external systems interface will be piloted in fiscal 2004/2005.

10.1.6. VISION Environment Documentation

WHAT WE PLANNED

The Agency planned to hire a contractor to document the technological infrastructure, both hardware and software, for the VISION servers using HTML (Hyper Text Mark-up Language).

WHAT WE DID

In 2002 a contractor completed a significant amount of work in tuning and optimizing the servers as well as documenting their current status, enhancements made and plans for disaster recovery. In 2003 the Agency completed a major upgrade of the VISION hardware and software. The Agency documented the entire process as well as streamlined and documented our operational procedures. The Agency now has a fully loaded staging environment that duplicates production and can be used as a backup in a disaster recovery situation.

WHAT THIS MEANS

The Agency has a complete set of architectural diagrams and technical documentation on all Vital Statistics servers and software. New and existing systems personnel can easily locate troubleshooting information on VISION.

FUTURE PLANS

The Agency is working on a VISION migration plan from client-server to WEB, using Oracles' 10g application server. This will allow for single sign-on capabilities for

integration with all Vital Statistics applications, including VISTA.

10.1.7. Character Set Enhancement

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency would review the possibility of adding new enhancements to the VISION computer system if further requests were received from the public to include symbols in names displayed on event certificates.
WHAT WE DID	In 2002, the Agency made enhancements to incorporate standard symbols used in the French language. No further needs beyond the changes already made were identified.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Client needs continue to be met with current system capabilities.
FUTURE PLANS	This activity has met all objectives.

10.1.8. VitalChek Credit Card Processing Upgrade

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency expanded service to the public by accepting applications for service with credit card payments, and partnered with VitalChek for the authorization of those payments.
WHAT WE DID	In 2002 the original VitalChek Daemon (a program for handling service requests) was replaced with a Java Daemon.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The system is more stable and provides improved system throughout.
FUTURE PLANS	Meet with technical personnel for VitalChek in regard to direct transmission of client requests to the VISION computer system.

10.1.9. Asset Inventory

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to initiate a formal plan for a computer asset management application based on business priorities.
WHAT WE DID	In 2002 a formal project was created within the Agency and an MS-Access application was built to track all the computer hardware and software assets. This resulted in significantly less time to organize and complete this data set.

	In 2003 the same application was used to account for movement of all our computer assets.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The Agency has a methodology, which has proven successful and is compatible with the asset management program utilized by the Ministry of Health Services.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to utilize the program to ensure proper documentation of asset movement, while reviewing new technology enhancements in asset management.

10.1.10. Security Access Tracking

WHAT WE PLANNED	To create a database to track the security access of everyone who has access to Agency data.
WHAT WE DID	In 2002 a database was created to track security access of all VISION users, with standard access profiles created and approved for new hires and internal transfers. During 2003, continued to monitor access provisions and identified requirements for exceptional access.
WHAT THIS MEANS	New hires or transfers into an identified user group may now be authorized by the manager in charge of their assigned areas. Any requests for exceptional access beyond the already approved profiles require review and approval by the security analyst and the Agency's Chief Executive Officer, ensuring proper security of data.
FUTURE PLANS	We plan to replace this with a commercial product set that ties into the single sign-on capability of AS10g – an Oracle Application Server based product.

10.1.11. Enhancements to the Public Internet and VSA Intranet Sites

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to continue the review of capabilities of the Public Internet and Ministry Intranet sites and modify them as required. As well, the Agency planned to use the Internet as a vehicle to provide Vital Statistics information.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency has continually upgraded data and search capabilities of the Vital Statistics Agency's public Internet and private Intranet sites, and enhanced the system's layout to closely mirror the new portal standards. The Agency has developed a technical infrastructure to enable the greater health community to perform detailed

	medical analysis against data aggregated from the Agency's VISTA system.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The look and feel of the public Internet and our own Intranet site have been changed to provide a clearer path for users to the information as and when they need access. Vital Statistics is able to provide clients of the Agency (such as local health authorities) the ability to perform detailed analysis without requiring direct access through mechanisms such as VPN (Virtual Private Network).
FUTURE PLANS	The Internet and Intranet sites will continue to be updated as information requirements change – due to legislative changes, feedback from users, and changes to government stan 'ards Based on stakeholder interest, the Agency plans to create a site that would outline certificate security features. The Internet and Intranet sites will be moved from their current repository off-site and be hosted on Vital Statistics' own Web Servers. The number of VISTA briefings (reports) available to health authorities and approved health researchers will be expanded. As well, we will be releasing limited data subsets for research purposes to the broader public.

10.1.12. Marriage Licence Issuer System Enhancements

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency provides and maintains a computer based system for private and public service Marriage Licence Issuers throughout the province for collection and verification of data required in the production of marriage licences.
WHAT WE DID	A number of enhancements were made during the past year to accommodate both legislative changes and input on changes from the user groups.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The program for issuance of Marriage Licences is now widely distributed throughout British Columbia, and a mechanism for upgrades is in place to accommodate such changes as same-sex marriage. British Columbia was able to accommodate this change in a timelier manner than other provinces and states.

FUTURE PLANS	A study will be conducted to determine the feasibility of providing the same functionality through a WEB application, provided that security concerns are addressed.

10.2. NATIONAL VITAL EVENTS DATA CAPTURE AND ROUTING SYSTEM

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Canadian Vital Statistics Council is seeking federal and provincial funding that will allow this project to move forward to the next stage. If the project receives required approvals and funding, British Columbia will be interested in participating.
WHAT WE DID	During the past year, we continued to participate in discussions regarding a potential pilot with the Federal Government and other Vital Statistics jurisdictions.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The project has been approved conceptually, and it is anticipated that the Federal Government will have the funds available to proceed. Each province will be requested to put forward a proposal if interested in being part of the pilot initiative.
FUTURE PLANS	British Columbia will be putting forward a proposal to participate in this program, outlining its past experience and available technological resources.

10.3. EXPANSION OF ACCESS TO VISION

10.3.1. Government Agent Access

WHAT WE PLANNED	To continue supporting Government Agents, both as their staff changes and as additional duties and tasks are identified within the scope of the business partnership with GA offices.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency continued to support the Government Agents by modifying system access to reflect additions, changes and deletions to Government Agent staff in individual offices, but no further changes to access were required.
WHAT THIS MEANS	No changes to the current access structure were identified as being required by the Government Agent branch. As Government Agents move toward providing more services via 'Kiosks', it is believed that they will benefit from future initiatives surrounding WEB applications.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to monitor requirements of Government Agents, both as their staff changes and as additional functionality is required.

10.3.2. Funeral Home Access

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency will continue to explore the concept of a web-interface for funeral service providers in accordance with applicable guidelines of the E-Government Initiatives program under the Province's Chief Information Office.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency reviewed the progress to date of its initial pilot and determined that security and integrity standards were not adequate. System resources for further development were limited by other system priorities that included the E-LINKS/PASSPORT and VISTA Warehouse projects.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Continuing Agency support for the development of a secure web interface with funeral service providers allowing real-time data entry and registration of death events represents an investment, which will contribute to timely reporting and enhanced service to the public.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will conduct a joint planning session, which will include both Agency representatives and funeral services providers, to determine the information systems requirements. The Agency will pursue the development of a web interface that incorporates the latest encryption and data security technology. The application will provide a seamless integration of the input, registration, printing and transmission protocols required to accomplish the on-line registration of deaths.

10.3.3. Electronic Notice of Birth and Request for a PHN

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency would work with the hospital community to determine a method for event (Notice of Live Birth) capture electronically from hospitals immediately following the birth of a child.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency worked with British Columbia Children's Hospital, British Columbia Women's Hospital and Health Centre in Vancouver to put together a project for electronic notice of birth. Discussions were also initiated with the Vancouver Island Health Authority. There were pressing budgetary issues and staff shortages in the hospitals.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Although all individuals realized the need for such an initiative, the project could not proceed.

FUTURE PLANS	Maintain open discussion with hospitals and the health authorities.

10.4. DATA WAREHOUSE (VISTA)

WHAT WE PLANNED	The VISTA rollout project will be expanded, and development of the Web version of the VISTA application, online Help system, and integrated GIS interface will continue.
WHAT WE DID	The first target group to receive secure Web access to VISTA was the province's Medical Health Officers (MHO's). All MHOs now have access, either directly or through their staff. Access has also been provided to other external organizations including Population Health and Wellness - Ministry of Health, the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Chief Coroner's Office, the British Columbia Reproductive Care Program, and others. The system has a complete on-line help system and now incorporates the ability to produce chloropleth maps. Each new user is provided a hands-on half-day training session for the system.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Organizations that rely on Vital Statistics information now have a user-friendly method of gaining immediate access to the data they require. This has reduced their dependence on Agency staff to generate the information they require.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency has initiated a partnership agreement with Simon Fraser University (SFU) that will provide them with a copy of VISTA. SFU will be responsible for providing access to academic researchers and will develop new functionality within VISTA for this purpose. The Agency will have the option of incorporating any components developed at SFU for general use in VISTA, The Agency has been approached by several external organizations that would like us to stage their data within VISTA. The Agency will investigate these opportunities in order to increase the utility of the warehouse for external users.

10.5. OTHER IT PROJECTS

10.5.1. Release of Historical Vital Event Records

WHAT WE PLANNED	A review to determine the viability of using "one off" scanning of images to allow all released records (births 1872 to 1901, marriages 1872 to 1926, and death 1872 to 1981) to be made available through the Internet. The Agency will continue maintaining microfilm records and vital event indexes to ensure that vital event records can be released in the year in which they are eligible for release.
WHAT WE DID	Information on births up to and including those in 1903, marriages to 1928 and deaths to 1983 are now available in select libraries, at the British Columbia Archives Reading Room, and through the Genealogical Society of Utah. All of these events may be searched on the Internet using the vital records index search facilities on the British Columbia Archives Web site. The public may also purchase genealogy certificates directly through our Agency. Through a partnership with British Columbia Archives and VitalChek Network these records are also available for purchase by credit card and delivery by e-mail.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Vital event records were released in accordance to prescribed legislation and are readily available to the public through the Internet. Microfilms of the original vital event documents are available for purchase at cost by libraries, genealogical societies and the public.
FUTURE PLANS	To continue maintaining microfilm records and vital event indexes as required to ensure that vital event records can be released in the year they are eligible for release. An amendment to the *Vital Statistics Act*, to be proclaimed in June of 2004, will result in restricting the public release of birth information from 100 years to 120 years. The Amendment will continue to allow for the release of birth, marriage or death registrations for genealogical research purposes after individuals named in the certificates have been dead for over 20 years.

10.5.2. MICAR Updates

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency will continue to update SuperMicar (the computer system used to analyse and identify the recognized cause of death for an individual) as revisions become available and will make any changes necessary to

	VISION and the Data Warehouse to accommodate these updates.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency updated SuperMicar several times as new releases were received from Statistics Canada.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Medical coding continues to generate more accurate data.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue to update SuperMicar as revisions become available and will make any changes necessary to VISION and the Data Warehouse to accommodate these updates.

10.5.3. VIDEO CONFERENCING

WHAT WE PLANNED	To implement the use of videoconferencing for meetings in order that all parties are able to have a visual presence.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency made use of the video conferencing system for all internal meetings during the past year. Agency staff was also instrumental in the set-up and initial training for use by executive of the Ministry of Health Services.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Meetings are now being attended by government officials throughout the province without additional communication charges or the necessity to travel outside their region of responsibility.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will promote the use of this medium, while continuing to investigate new technological developments.

10.6. IMPACTS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

10.6.1. Strong Birth Certificate

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned on creating a process and system to facilitate the recording of lost and stolen certificates. In addition, the Agency will continue to explore the system and business changes necessary for activating and/or de-listing certificates.
WHAT WE DID	Conflicting system and business priorities for the E-LINKS/PASSPORT and VISTA Warehouse projects during fiscal 2003/2004 precluded any further development activity on this project.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Project development was deferred until fiscal 2004/2005.

FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will implement a system for recording and reporting information concerning lost and stolen birth certificates

10.6.2. Birth Certificate Validation - Passport Office

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Agency planned to pilot a project with the Passport Office for validation of birth certificate data presented during the passport application process.
WHAT WE DID	Major enhancements were made in the VISION production database to accommodate electronic verification of data submitted from the Victoria Passport Office. Full integration testing was completed and the pilot project began July 29, 2003. Approximately 5,500 transactions were received, and verifications returned to the Passport office by the end of the pilot on November 3, 2003.
WHAT THIS MEANS	Technological methods learned and applied will enable the Agency to participate in further cross-government initiatives.
FUTURE PLANS	This initiative is complete.

10.6.3. Birth Certificate Validation – HRDC

WHAT WE PLANNED	Vital Statistics and Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) would work closely on the development of a program for verification of the accuracy of birth certificate information provided by applicants for Canadian Pension Plan benefits and Social Insurance Numbers.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency developed the technological infrastructure to receive data from British Columbia birth certificates submitted by HRDC, and make a comparison on a field-by-field basis with birth event registration data on file with the Agency. Through this process, we can verify the accuracy of the birth certificate information submitted with a "Y" or "N" response transmitted electronically for each designated certificate data field.
WHAT THIS MEANS	The Agency has completed all of the technical and business requirements for this pilot, and is ready for implementation of the pilot.

FUTURE PLANS	No further work is required until Human Resources Development Canada has signed the Memorandum of Understanding and sets the date for implementation of the pilot project.

10.6.4. Change of Name Criminal Record Check

WHAT WE PLANNED	In fiscal 2002/2003, the Agency will modify the processes and system to ensure that fingerprints are sent to the RCMP for criminal record checks.
WHAT WE DID	A system was put in place to allow the Agency to collect fingerprints so that criminal record checks can be done using fingerprints as well as the other identity components (name, birth date, birth place).
WHAT THIS MEANS	A person's criminal record will be maintained even if they legally change their name.
FUTURE PLANS	This activity has met all objectives in the 2002/2003 fiscal year.

10.6.5. British Columbia Death/British Columbia Birth Link

WHAT WE PLANNED	This was a new project identified and initiated during the current fiscal year.
WHAT WE DID	The computer system was modified so that when a death is registered for a person born in British Columbia the birth registry is searched and a link established between the person's birth and death records to identify birth records where the person is deceased.
WHAT THIS MEANS	One of the items that the Agency returns to a Verification request (e.g. from Passport or HRDC) is whether or not the person identified on the birth certificate is dead. If the person is reported dead, this raises a potential fraud issue. This project enables us to provide expanded information to the requestor.
FUTURE PLANS	This activity has met all objectives in the 2003/2004 fiscal year.

11. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

WHAT WE PLANNED	Continue to benefit from the expertise of the Ministry's Communication Branch's consultation services related to all press releases and media-related issues, as well as seek counsel on new external publications.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency continued to produce all Vital Statistics publications in-house using experienced resources in the field of graphic design and information technology. The major products were the Annual Report, the Agency's Strategic Business Plan, a secure website for identification of valid British Columbia birth certificates, and web updates associated with same-sex marriages in British Columbia.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue a consultative relationship with the Ministry's Communications Branch to ensure potentially sensitive issues are appropriately addressed. We will also continue to modify all Internet publications to meet the graphic design standards of the British Columbia Government.

12. HEALTH STATUS REGISTRY

12.1. MULTI-USER INTERFACE

WHAT WE PLANNED	Further efficiency in data access and maintenance will be achieved by converting the database to a true client server model using Oracle software.
WHAT WE DID	In 2002, the existing MS Access database was ported to Oracle and upgraded. During testing of the upgraded system a number of limitations and potential problems were encountered resulting in a return to the development phase for the project. The new system has gone through system testing and user testing, the final stage before implementation has begun. A project has been initiated to enable the inclusion of Health Status Registry (HSR) data in the VISTA data warehouse and to develop summary measures for use in the Agency's reporting function.
WHAT THIS MEANS	When implemented, the system will have expanded capability to allow several users simultaneous access to edit and extract data for analysis. The VISTA reporting tool will enable fast data extraction and analysis for both standard reports and ad hoc querying.
FUTURE PLANS	The Agency will continue work on system enhancements.

12.2. NEW DATA SOURCES

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Health Status Registry will continue to pursue new sources of data on individuals with reportable conditions and will implement new and improved reporting procedures as required.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency began collecting Autism and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) data from the Provincial Health Services Authority and continues to work to bring new reporting sources on line. The Agency discovered a significant limitation in our data holdings from British Columbia hospitals and has retrieved the missing data from the Discharge Abstract Database. The Agency funded joint work by the Asante Centre for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Sunnyhill Health Centre for Children and the Centre for Community Child Health Research into the feasibility of a provincial strategy on diagnosis, coding and classification of FASD cases.

WHAT THIS MEANS	The British Columbia Health Status Registry has proven to be a leader in the surveillance of birth anomalies on the national and international scene. The HSR's work on FAS supports the Ministry's work on mitigating effects of this condition. The recapture of the hospitalization data significantly improves the data quality and coverage of the HSR data.
FUTURE PLANS	The HSR will continue to pursue initiatives to maintain the quality and comprehensiveness of its database.

12.3. DATA ANALYSES

WHAT WE PLANNED	The Heath Status Registry (HSR) plans to release annual reports and feature reports highlighting the incidence of specific birth conditions on a regular basis.
WHAT WE DID	The decision was made not to produce an HSR annual report in 2003 because of the identified missing data from British Columbia hospitals. Data from the HSR was used in several high profile international studies. Staff at the HSR authored several reports using HSR data for the Canadian Congenital Abnormalities Surveillance Network of Health Canada. The Agency contributed data to the publications of the International Clearinghouse of Birth Defects Monitoring Systems.
FUTURE PLANS	The Registry will continue providing reports and database updates to its partner agencies.

13. VITAL STATISTICS COUNCIL FOR CANADA

13.1. DESCRIPTION

The Vital Statistics Council for Canada is a partnership between all provincial and territorial government departments of vital statistics in Canada and Statistics Canada the purpose of which is to ensure standard methods of collecting, compiling and publishing vital statistics. The Council also facilitates the exchange vital event data between provinces, territories and the federal governments, enables the compilation of vital statistics at the national level and serves as an advisory body to provincial/territorial registrars and the Health Statistics Division of Statistics Canada.

13.1.1. Key Business Functions

- organise an annual inter-jurisdictional forum to discuss issues around registration and certification of births, deaths, marriages, stillbirths and changes of names;
- facilitate sharing, exchange and retention of information, data and research between jurisdictions;
- discuss, with a view to achieving common approaches and uniformity where appropriate, the forms and certificates being used, the governing legislation, the procedures and format of the transfer and receipt of national and provincial/territorial data to/from Statistics Canada;
- liaise with all groups of service providers (e.g. physicians, coroners, funeral directors, law enforcement agencies, lawyers, notaries, etc.);
- liaise with other federal and provincial government departments, including the Passport Office, HRDC Income Security Programs, the Social Insurance Number Registry, Provincial Motor Vehicle Licensing and Provincial Social Services Ministries and Agencies;
- support and achieve a synergy of a national data base; and
- liaise with counterparts in the United States.

13.2. MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

WHAT WE PLANNED	Agency plans included maintenance of its role as an active member of Council and participation on many committees of Council. In addition the Agency will provide resources in support of Council activities where possible.
WHAT WE DID	The Agency A/Chief Executive Officer represented the Province on Council and sat on the Council Executive Committee as Chair Elect through fiscal 2003/2004.

During fiscal 2003/2004 Agency staff were involved in the following committees;

- Executive Committee;
- Security Committee;
- Registration Processes Committee;
- HRDC Negotiations Committee;
- National Routing System Project Committee;
- Website Sub-Committee

During fiscal 2003/2004 Agency staff provided support to Council activities by;

- Providing support to the preparation of Councils' Strategic Plan.
- Providing support to the work of the Registration Processes Committee in investigating birth registration options in an environment where human reproduction is technologically assisted.
- Managing and maintaining the operation of the Council website.

APPENDIX A: EXPENDITURE DETAIL 2003/04

STOB		BUDGET 2003/04	ACTUAL 2003/04	VARIANCE 2003/04
EB50	**BASE SALARIES**	**3,930,000**	**3,901,621**	**28,379**
	Employee Base Salaries	3,880,000	3,869,618	10,382
	Overtime	20,000	9,175	10,825
	Lump Sum	30,000	22,828	7,172
EB51	**SUPPLEMENTARY SALARIES**	**38,000**	**24,562**	**13,438**
EB52	**EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**	**922,000**	**882,233**	**39,767**
EB57	**TRAVEL**	**65,000**	**55,964**	**9,036**
EB59	**COMMON SHARED SERVICES**	**213,500**	**330,256**	**(116,756)**
	Voice Network Services	185,500	182,730	2,770
	MVS Services	28,000	1,145	26,855
	Data Network Services	0	8,448	(8,448)
	Common and Shared Applications	0	79,963	(79,963)
	Human Resources Contract	0	15,127	(15,127)
	Legal Services	0	42,843	(42,843)
EB60	**PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**	**26,000**	**9,180**	**16,820**
	Professional Service Contracts	26,000	9,180	16,820
	Research Support			
EB63	**INFORMATION SYSTEMS**	**743,500**	**635,000**	**108,500**
	Contracted Data Entry	115,000	128,081	(13,081)
	Information Systems Supplies	23,000	20,591	2,409
	CITS Support	175,000	175,000	0
	Info Systems Consulting	205,000	250,511	(45,511)
	Voice/Fax Communications	0	14,168	(14,168)
	Cell Telephones	7,000	8,046	(1,046)
	Pagers	500	281	219
	Internet Charges	8,000	8,097	(97)
	Data Communications	0	1,012	(1,012)
	Minor Hardware & Software	10,000	12,361	(2,361)
	Mainframe Hardware under $10,000	10,000	0	10,000
	Software Maintenance Agreements. VSA	80,000	605	79,395
	Hardware Maintenance Agreements. VSA	70,000	4,141	65,859
	Systems Hardware Leases	40,000	12,106	27,894
	Recoverable Info. Systems	0	0	0
EB65	**OFFICE AND BUSINESS EXPENSES**	**527,000**	**504,224**	**22,776**
	Office Expenses - General	9,200	11,018	(1,818)
	Office Books & Subscriptions	3,800	5,267	(1,467)
	Printed Materials	90,000	71,536	18,464
	Office Stationary & Supplies	28,500	22,048	6,452
	Minor Furniture	16,500	4,402	12,098
	Photocopiers	17,000	14,600	2,400
	Postal Services	240,000	239,808	192

	Courier Services	68,000	81,265	(13,265)
	Training	30,000	38,402	(8,402)
	Business Expenses	7,000	3,870	3,130
	Membership Dues	0	325	(325)
	Recoverable - Forms	17,000	11,683	5,317
EB68	**STATUTORY NOTICES**	**18,000**	**8,847**	**9,153**
	Annual Report	6,500	0	6,500
	Other	11,500	8,847	2,653
EB69/70	**UTILITIES/MATERIALS/SUPPLIES**	**28,000**	**32,998**	**(4,998)**
	Microfilming	16,000	26,165	(10,165)
	Micro Equip Maintenance	2,000	2,815	(815)
	Lease Vehicles	10,000	548	9,452
EB69/70	Other	0	3,470	(3,470)
EB73	**AMORTIZATION EXPENSES**	**642,000**	**599,565**	**42,435**
	PC Amortization	142,000	124,400	17,600
	Mini-Comp Amortization	440,000	405,476	34,524
	Furniture and Equipment Amortization	48,000	48,518	(518)
	Vehicle Amortization	0	4,256	(4,256)
	Operating Equipment Amortization	12,000	16,915	(4,915)
EB75	**BUILDING OCCUPANCY CHARGES**	**569,000**	**588,586**	**(19,586)**
	Victoria	385,000	388,386	(3,386)
	Lease Negotiation fee Victoria	0	29,280	(29,280)
	Vancouver	76,000	74,536	1,464
	Kelowna	43,000	42,234	766
	Prince George	35,000	35,913	(913)
	Warehouse Charges	20,000	14,053	5,947
	Leasehold Improvements	10,000	4,184	5,816
EB77	**GRANTS**	**18,000**	**115,000**	**(97,000)**
	Grants to Universities	18,000	115,000	(97,000)
EB80	**CONTRIBUTIONS**	**30,000**	**22,414**	**7,586**
	District Registrar Ancillary Fees	5,000	2,042	2,958
	District Registrar Commissions	24,000	352	23,648
	Hospital NOB Commissions		19,750	(19,750)
	Non-Public Servant Travel	1,000	270	730
EB85	**INTEREST AND OTHER EXPENSES**	**0**	**22,166**	**(22,166)**
	Financing Costs	0	22,166	(22,166)
	GROSS APPROPRIATED EXPENDITURES	**7,770,000**	**7,732,616**	**37,384**
EB88	**INTERNAL RECOVERIES**	**(278,000)**	**(543,387)**	**265,387**
	Ministry Of Social Services	(255,000)	(524,000)	269,791
	Other Ministries	(23,000)	(18,596)	(4,404)
EB89	**RECOVERIES - EXTERNAL**	**(407,000)**	**(501,093)**	**94,093**
	Federal Government	(132,000)	(132,336)	336

	Adoptions	(30,000)	(31,850)	1,85(
	Commemoratives	(120,000)	(156,300)	36,30(
	Genealogy	(100,000)	(108,800)	8,80(
	Research	(20,000)	(52,687)	32,687
	Other (Microfilm)	(5,000)	(19,120)	14,12(
	NET APPROPRIATED EXPENDITURES	**7,085,000**	**6,688,136**	**$396,864**
EB22/23	**CAPITAL ACQUISITIONS**			
	Systems Total	**575,000**	**415,430**	**159,57(**
	Mainframe and Mini Hardware	176,000	94,771	81,22(
	PC and Peripheral Hardware	100,000	75,993	24,007
	Mainframe and Mini Software	259,000	240,478	18,52(
	PC Software	40,000	4,188	35,81(
EB21	**Operating Equipment**	**5,000**	**0**	**5,00(**
EB22	**Office Furniture and Equipment**	**20,000**	**26,814**	**(6,814**
	Vehicles	0	0	(
	Total Capital Acquisitions	**600,000**	**442,244**	**157,75(**

APPENDIX B: STATUS REPORT ON FLEXIBILITY POLICIES

As part of establishing Vital Statistics as a Special Operating Agency (SOA), Treasury Board granted a number of policy flexibilities to the new Special Operating Agency. The original flexibility policies are located in the Agency Framework Agreement signed March 14, 1996. As a result of excellent performance in the first three years as a SOA, Treasury Board agreed to the negotiation of additional flexibilities during the period of the 1999-2004 Business Plan.

B.1 APPROPRIATION CONTROLS

B.1.1 Expenditure Carryovers

The Agency has realised operating expenditure budget surpluses in each year since its establishment as a SOA in fiscal 1996/1997. The accumulated operating surplus since implementation of the S0A, including the fiscal 2003/2004 surplus of $396,864 is $1,866,662. Access to carry-over surpluses has effectively been eliminated as a result of the government policy to maintain Ministry budgets at pre-established levels in order to balance the provincial budget in fiscal 2004/05. These input controls have forced the Agency to focus on smaller, short-term projects due to the lack of certainty as to the availability of surpluses being available to fund longer-term projects. The Agency will work with Treasury Board staff in an attempt to formally implement this flexibility in the future.

B.1.2 Multi-year Budgeting

Informally, the Agency and Treasury Board staffs have effectively invoked this flexibility through the establishment of the spending plans in the business plan. The multi-year budgets have been useful in establishing a level of certainty over a multi-year period for the Agency, however, the inability of the Agency to access prior years surpluses reduces the effectiveness of these multi-years budgets. They have effectively become pre-approvals of fixed annual allocations for three years in advance.

B.1.3 Spending of Recoveries Above Estimates

Although the Agency realised significant recoveries above estimates in each of the last seven fiscal years it has to date been unable to fully access this flexibility because of the inability to bring these surpluses forward from one fiscal year to the next. (The extent of recoveries above estimates may not be recognised until close to the end of the fiscal year when little or no time is available to initiate projects utilising these funds). Establishment of a mechanism to access prior year's expenditure carryovers and effective multi-year budgeting will facilitate full access to this flexibility.

B.1.4 Exemption from Expenditure Restraint Exercises

With the establishment of the Agency as an independent financial accounting entity the Agency has fully implemented this flexibility in terms of Ministry expenditure restraint exercises. The Agency recognises the need for restraint and as a result continues to operate in the spirit of restraint during periods of cross government restraint exercises.

B.2 ACCOMMODATION

B.2.1 Authority to Implement Accommodation and Major Project Plans Approved in the Business Plan

The Agency has the authority to implement accommodation and Major Project plans approved in the Business Plan. This flexibility was implemented in fiscal 1996/1997 in order to reduce space requirements in the Vancouver Regional office in compliance with the 1996/1997 Business Plan. These plans were fully implemented in fiscal 1997/1998. There has been no requirement to undertake major accommodation projects since.

B.2.2 Authority to Contract With B.C.B.C. or a Private Company

The Agency has the authority to contract with B.C.B.C. or a private company. As partners, B.C.B.C. representatives and the Agency continue to analyse lease options, overhead and maintenance agreements to determine if cost savings can be identified.

Experience to date indicates that B.C.B.C. continues to be committed to working directly with and maintaining a good working relationship with the Agency.

B.3 ADVERTISING AND PUBLICATIONS

B.3.1 Communications Plan

With the support of Treasury Board the Agency may negotiate agreements and obtain pre-approval of a communications plan and budget from Public Affairs Bureau. This flexibility has been fully implemented.

B.3.2 Control of Communications Activities

The Agency is authorized to have direct control of communication activities, commitments and expenditures as outlined in the annual communications plan. This flexibility has been fully implemented. Starting April 1, 2004, the Agency started advertising Service Provider vacancies on the Agency's public website. This new method of communication will reduce publication expenditure costs.

B.4 AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS

The Agency has fully implemented its authority in negotiating and signing all intra and inter-governmental agreements to which the Agency is party. Data access and recovery agreements have been struck with numerous provincial and federal ministries as well as vital statistics organisations in other provinces. The Agency has obtained approval to authorize its own contribution accounts under section 25 of the Financial Administration Act. This will facilitate the Agencies ability to obtain contributions from other government when entering into agreements with these governments.

B.5 CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

The Agency has fully implemented full authority over capital expenditures less than $250,000 as per this flexibility. With the exception of systems development, specifically on the data warehouse project, no capital projects exceeding $250,000 were included in the Annual Plan or were undertaken in fiscal 2003/2004.

B.6 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

B.6.1 Systems Expenditures

The flexibility authorises the Agency to spend up to $1 million and up to 10 percent above amounts identified in the Business Plan as planned expenditures. The authority of the Agency to take advantage of this flexibility is now fully recognised by the Ministry. This flexibility has been fully implemented.

B.6.2 Development of Cost Effective Systems Solutions

As a result of the Agency's ability to develop its own systems solutions the Agency has been able to attain and exceed its spending reduction targets over the past four fiscal years. The Agency continues to work with CITS and other ministries to develop innovative solutions applicable to other organisations as part of its systems development projects.

B.7 MACHINERY, EQUIPMENT, LAND, BUILDINGS AND WORKS

The Agency is authorized to purchase or lease machinery and equipment up to a cost of $1 million if any item over $250,000 is included in the Annual Plan. There has been no requirement to exercise this flexibility to date.

B.8 SERVICE CONTRACTS/CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Under the Special Operating Agreement, the Agency had authority to enter into service contracts up to $250,000 at a time when other ministries were limited to $100,000. A recent Treasury Board Directive has removed the requirement for contract approvals. Therefore, the Agency no longer has flexibility advantage over other ministries.

The Agency tenders and manages its own contracts and, when required, receives assistance from the Ministry of Managements Services -Purchasing and Contract Management Resource Centres

B.9 STAFFING LIMITS

The Agency is permitted access to the Government's Corporate FTE complement for additional FTE requirements that are related to unanticipated volume demands. The Agency has not been required to use this access as it has been under its FTE budget in all fiscal years since this flexibility was granted.

B.10 VEHICLE MANAGEMENT

The Agency is authorized to enter into its own vehicle management and leasing program. The Agency continued to manage its own vehicles throughout 2003/2004 although leases were

contracted through the Ministry. The Agency would derive no benefit by opting out of Government fleet lease.

B.11 PAYMENTS BASED ON CONTRIBUTIONS

The Agency has authority to approve grants to a maximum of $250,000 on a per item basis, and up to $1 million if detailed in the Annual Plan. There were no grants in excess of $250,000 in 2003/2004.

B.12 PURCHASE OF MATERIAL

The Agency has the authority to negotiate with Procurement Shared Services or to purchase through independent suppliers. The Agency has worked with the Procurement Shared Services on purchases of major items and only exercised independent authority for minor items where it has been established that it is cost effective to do so.

B.13 SALES OF SURPLUS ASSETS

The Agency has the ability to contract asset disposal with either the Procurement Shared Services or with the private sector with revenue to be directly returned to the Agency. Based on a limited amount of equipment identified as surplus and due to Ministry needs, the Agency has continued to ship surplus equipment to the Ministry for redistribution.

B.14 MICROGRAPHIC SERVICES AND EQUIPMENT

The Agency has authority to purchase micrographic services and equipment up to $500,000 but the Agency's purchase of micrographic services and equipment did not exceed $18,000 for the 2003/2004 fiscal year.

B.15 BC MAIL PLUS

The Agency is authorized to purchase or contract for postal equipment or services to meet its specific requirements, or may continue to contract with BC Mail Plus. The Agency continues to contract with BC Mail Plus.

B.16 PHOTOCOPYING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

The authority for approval for the purchase of photocopying equipment and related service contracts has been delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Agency. In fiscal 20032004 the Agency has exercised its authority only to replace obsolete equipment as required to meet its own photocopying needs.

B.16.1 Government Records and Recorded Information Management

The Agency has full authority over records and recorded information management within the scope of the *Financial Administration Act* and associated government policy. As implementation of this flexibility is not considered a high priority, the Agency has continued to use Ministry records management services.

B.17 TRAVEL

B.17.1 Accommodation Policies

The Agency is authorized to exceed overnight accommodation rates where it is cost justifiable. Establishment of the Agency as its own financial accounting entity has enabled the Agency to fully implement this flexibility, though only minimal utilisation was required in fiscal 2003/2004.

B.17.2 Out of Province Travel

The Agency is approved to authorize travel within Canada (outside British Columbia) and the United States for established business purposes. This flexibility has been fully implemented.

B.17.3 Payment of Travel Claims

The Agency has the authority to implement alternative processes for the processing and payment of travel claims (e.g. SFO Bank Account). Due to the implementation of the CAS and i-Expenses systems, the use of American Express Corporate Cards for travel and the establishment of the Agency as its own financial accounting entity, there is no longer a requirement for alternative processes.

B.17.4 Contracted Travel Services

The Agency is authorized to make its own travel arrangements or make use of the Ministry contracted travel agency. The Agency has continued to make use of the Ministry travel agency though maintains its own business travel account. The Agency will be monitoring changes in the travel industry during fiscal 2004/2005 to ensure it obtains the most cost-effective means of meeting its travel needs.

B.18 HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY

B.18.1 Staffing and Classification Issues

The CEO may review staffing and classification issues directly with the Public Service Agency where essential to meet the business success of the Agency. The Agency currently deals directly with the Public Service Agency on classification issues as part of the Agency service agreement with the Public Service Agency.

B.18.2 Employee Incentives and Rewards

The Agency may provide work-related incentives and rewards over and above those normally available. The Agency established a small fund in its fiscal 1998/1999 budget to provide token (non-financial) awards to employees. The Agency has fully implemented the provincial governments Staff Appreciation Awards Policy in order to recognise outstanding employee performance. Due to the success of the Agency in obtaining recognition and awards for its employees through the Employee Recognition Program, and through the Public Service Awards Program, additional awards over and above those normally available have not been deemed necessary in the past few years.

B.18.3 FTE Freeze Exemption

The Agency is authorized to operate within its approved Annual Plan and will be exempt from Treasury Board FTE freezes. This flexibility has been implemented within the context of Government/Ministry employee placement programs. Although the Agency has not been required to obtain additional FTEs under this flexibility the Agency has been able to fill vacant positions. There has been a negative impact resulting from employee placement programs as employees are placed on the basis of seniority; placements are frequently unqualified for the positions in which they are placed resulting in extensive training being required with a high turnover of some placements.